

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE BRONZE AGE LEVANT

The Levant – modern Lebanon, southern Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine – is one of the most intensively excavated regions of the world. This richly documented and illustrated survey offers a state-of-the-art description of the formative phase of Levantine societies, as they perfected the Mediterranean village economy and began to interact with neighboring civilizations in Egypt and Syria, on the way to establishing their first towns and city-state polities. Citing numerous finds and interpretive approaches, the author offers a new narrative of social and cultural development, emulation, resistance and change, illustrating how Levantine communities translated broader movements of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean Bronze Age – the emergence of states, international trade, elite networks and imperial ambitions – into a uniquely Levantine idiom.

Raphael Greenberg is Associate Professor of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University. Specializing in the study of early urban formations, economies and institutions, he currently heads the Tel Bet Yerah excavations near the Sea of Galilee and is co-founder of Emek Shaveh – a non-profit that monitors the political role of archaeology in Jerusalem and beyond.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
THE BRONZE AGE LEVANT

*From Urban Origins to the Demise of City-States,
3700–1000 BCE*

RAPHAEL GREENBERG

Tel Aviv University



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To Adi, Ofer and Ayal

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
1 Introduction	I
2 Villages and the Growth of Social Power in the Early Bronze I	24
3 Urbanism and Its Demise in the Early Bronze II and III	70
4 The Intermediate Bronze Age: Entering the Orbit of Syria	136
5 Villages, Manors and Integrated City-States of the Middle Bronze Age	180
6 The Late Bronze Age: Under Egypt’s Heel	272
7 Conclusion: The Legacy of the Bronze Age Levant	354
<i>Bibliography</i>	359
<i>Index</i>	409

ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1	Map of the Levant	<i>page</i> 5
1.2	The first systematic excavation at a Bronze Age site in the Levant: Tell el-Hesi, 1892	9
2.1	Map of sites mentioned in this chapter	27
2.2	Partial site plans of (a) Yiftah'el and (b) Sidon Dakerman, and (c) artist's reconstruction of the curvilinear houses of Tel Te'o	31
2.3	EB IA pottery: (a–d) southern types, (e–j) northern types	33
2.4	EB IA flint and stone artifacts: (a) Canaanite blades, (b) tabular scraper, (c) basalt whorl, (d) bowl and (e) potter's wheel	38
2.5	Reconstruction of shaft-tomb burial at EB IA Bab edh-Dhra'	41
2.6	Plan of the "Stratum C1" buildings at Tel Erani	44
2.7	Plans of the EB IB village at Palmahim Quarry (superimposed on ovoid structures of the EB IA) and H. 'Illin Tahtit	46
2.8	The large EB IB building at Tel Bet Shean, Area M, with figures standing on pillar bases	47
2.9	The EB IB temples at Megiddo: left, the Stratum J3 temple and courtyard; right, reconstructed plan of the Stratum J4 Great Temple that succeeded it	49
2.10	Selected incised drawings from the Megiddo picture pavement, showing a feline straddling a headless human corpse, the figure of a ruler with headdress and spear, a suppliant and a bull	49
2.11	A bilobate EB IB tomb at Azor	50
2.12	Representations of the EB I traction complex: a donkey bearing panniers from a tomb at Azor and a plowing scene on a stamp seal from Tel Kitan	51
2.13	Selected EB IB pottery from Tel Kitan	53
2.14	The Tell es-Sakan EB IB mudbrick fortification lines, visible to the right of and beneath the standing figure	59
2.15	Incised serekh of Narmer on an imported Egyptian jar found at Arad	61
2.16	The late EB IB destruction at Tell Abu al-Kharaz	65
3.1	Map of sites mentioned in this chapter	73
3.2	Tel Bet Yerah: a locally manufactured ceramic jug featuring a group of Egyptian signs incised after firing (left), and a fragment of an Egyptian relief-decorated siltstone palette or bowl (right)	74

3.3	EB II fortifications and gates: top, the south gate and town wall at Tel Bareqet; bottom left, reconstructed gate of Tell el-Far'ah (North); bottom right, the EB II fortifications at Tel Yarmuth	78
3.4	General plans of Arad (top, inset – temple precinct), Labwe (bottom left) and Tell el-Far'ah (North) (bottom right)	80
3.5	A paved street in the south part of Tel Bet Yerah, flanked by houses (Bar-Adon excavations of 1951)	82
3.6	Left, reconstructed house compound at Arad and model house or temple from Arad; right, house plans at Tel Bet Yerah	83
3.7	Left, map showing Lower Cretaceous outcrops in relation to sites with high proportions (at least 50 percent of non-cooking wares) of South Levantine Metallic ware; right, approximate distribution of South Levantine Metallic ware and Golan cooking pots	87
3.8	Metallic ware types and globular Golan cooking pot (middle row)	89
3.9	Arad-type pottery from southern Sinai compared with vessels from Arad; at right, a house compound from the southern Sinai site of Sheikh 'Awad	90
3.10	Houses and associated pits and installations at Tell Numayra	100
3.11	The upper town of Kh. ez-Zeraqun; note blocked posterns in the town wall and the partial blockage of the gate	102
3.12	Late EB III Wall C at Tel Bet Yerah (Bar-Adon excavations of 1952), looking east	103
3.13	Plan of Yarmuth Palace B1 and the adjacent houses	106
3.14	The Megiddo temple complex in late EB III	108
3.15	Plan of the Circles Building and plaza at Tel Bet Yerah	110
3.16	Reconstruction of EB III charnel house at Bab edh-Dhra'	112
3.17	Large EB III platter, krater and pithos from Tel Yarmuth	114
3.18	(a) Ivory bull's head, (b) lion-shaped vessel and (c) mother-and-child figurine from Tel Bet Yerah	115
3.19	Cylinder seals and impressions from (a) Tell es-Safi and (b, c) Tell Fadous-Kfarabida	117
3.20	Khirbet Kerak ware from Tel Bet Yerah: (a) bowl, (b) jar, (c, d) kraters, (e) decorated lid and (f) andiron	118
3.21	Khirbet Kerak ware: (a) figurines, (b) wheel model and (c) miniature bowl	120
3.22	Plan of Early Bronze III structures at Tell Fadous-Kfarabida; at right, a bone scale beam	125
3.23	Early Bronze III pottery from Tell Arqa	126
4.1	Map of sites mentioned in this chapter	143
4.2	Tell-avoidance in the IBA: (a) the location of settlements in relation to Tel Yarmuth, (b) Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish and (c) the walled precinct of EBA Bab edh-Dhra'	146
4.3	EB IV houses at Tell Arqa	147
4.4	Block-plans of Shaar Hagolan and Tell Um Hammad in the IBA, and an independent, modular house-unit, with its ceramic assemblage, in Nahal Refa'im	149
4.5	The "gateway" in Area C at Kh. Iskandar	152

4.6	Plan of Har Yeroham	153
4.7	The IBA drinking repertoire in several workshop traditions: (a) black wheelmade ware, (b) northern Jordan Valley, (c) middle Jordan Valley and (d) Judean hills/Negev Highlands	155
4.8	“Terminal EBA” pottery from Tel Bet Yerah, Period E (left), and IBA pottery from Sha‘ar Hagolan (right)	156
4.9	Three types of Negev Highlands settlements: (a) Be‘er Resisim, (b) Nahal Nizzana and (c) Be‘er Ratav	160
4.10	Y. Goren’s analysis of the provenience of IBA pottery from six Negev Highlands sites	162
4.11	Stone molds for copper axes and ingots and copper ingots from the earlier phase of Kh. Hamra Ifdan	163
4.12	Type A individualizing tombs at Ramat Hanadiv and Jericho; Type B collective tombs at Hazorea‘ and Jericho	169
4.13	The ‘Ain Samiya goblet	175
5.1	Modeled radiocarbon dates for (a) the start of the MB I at Tel Hayyat, (b, c) the transition to MB II at Tell el-Ifshar and Burak, (d) the transition to late MB II at Tell ed-Dab‘a and (e, f) the final MB II at Kabri and Jericho	183
5.2	Map of MB I–II sites mentioned in this chapter	191
5.3	The MB I–II sequence of shrines at Tell el-Hayyat	195
5.4	Tel Bet Yerah: an MB I potter’s kiln (left), locally produced Syrian-style pottery, and two decorated Tell el-Yahudiya juglets from graves	196
5.5	“Warrior burials”: Tomb A/II-p/14–18 L 468 at Tell ed-Dab‘a, interior, with male interment and associated weapons; exterior, with female servant and donkey burial; below, Grave 13 at Gesher, with duckbill axe, socketed spearhead and early MB I pots	199
5.6	Byblos: offerings from the sacred precinct, including a decorated gold dagger and fenestrated axe, a boat model and silver goblets; below, cast bronze figurines from the Nahariyya shrine	202
5.7	Tell el-Ifshar: imported Egyptian jar, Levantine Painted pottery and an onion-shaped jar	205
5.8	Coastal red-slipped and polished MB I pottery	206
5.9	Plan of Afeq and its manor houses	210
5.10	Ashqelon: the MB I gate, a section through the rampart, and the topography of the ancient site	213
5.11	Tel Dan: aerial view of the rampart city prior to the excavations (left), and the arched mudbrick city gate during excavation (right)	216
5.12	Plan of the fortified estate at Tell el-Burak	218
5.13	Wall paintings at Tell el-Burak	218
5.14	An Egyptian clay sealing from Ashqelon	220
5.15	Proto-Sinaitic dedicatory inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadim in western Sinai: the inscription on the statue base includes a dedication to the patron goddess (<i>b‘lt</i>) of the mines, while the stela mentions the West Asian master miner (<i>rb nqbmm</i>) who dedicated it	223
5.16	MB II fine wares	227

5.17	Two sculpted ceramic libation vessels in the Tell el-Yahudiya technique: a head-cup from Jericho and a zoomorphic trick vessel from Tur'an	228
5.18	Topographic plan of Tel Hazor, with MBA cultic compounds indicated in Areas H, F and A	229
5.19	Aerial view of the upper city MBA cult area; the "Southern Temple" at top right and the stela field and associated installations at bottom left	231
5.20	Smashed jars in the wine cellar of the Tel Kabri palatial estate	235
5.21	The location and catchments of MB II Jerusalem and nearby villages; the large site of Battir falls outside the map, about 2 kilometers west of the Walajeh shrine	239
5.22	General plan of the Nahal Refa'im site in the MBA (block plans) and IBA (in outline); below, plans of Houses 2720 (left) and 300 (right)	240
5.23	Composite plans of Tell el-Ajjul (left) and Tell el-Najila (right)	246
5.24	Tomb 498 at Kabri, top view (left) and final disposition of finds near the doorway (right)	257
5.25	Wooden objects from MB II tombs at Jericho: a three-legged table (left), a bowl and two decorated boxes	259
5.26	MB II bone inlays from Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell el-Ajjul and el-Jisr	260
5.27	Locally produced MB II scarabs from Barqai and Tell el-Ajjul, and a hematite cylinder seal ("green jasper" type) from Tell Beit Mirsim	261
6.1	Map of sites mentioned in this chapter	273
6.2	Pottery at the MB-LB transition: (a, b) Wheelmade Bichrome goblet and jug, (c) transitional MB-LB cooking pot and (d, e) Chocolate-on-White jug and mixing bowl	277
6.3	LB IA shrines at Bet Shean and Lachish	279
6.4	Locally produced Egyptian-type "flowerpots" from the early phase of the Egyptian presence at Jaffa and the reconstructed façade of the Ramesside portal	290
6.5	Egypt in Bet Shean: (a) plan of Level VI (Hebrew University excavations), (b) reconstruction of Building 1500, (c) relative quantities of Egyptian and local pottery in Level VI houses, (d) locally made Egyptian pottery and (e) an anthropoid coffin with "grotesque" features, from the northern cemetery	294
6.6	The Kamid el-Loz "Treasury": plan and selected finds – stone bowl and amphora, bronze sword and fire-pan, inlaid game-box, terracotta chariot model and duck-shaped ivory cosmetic vessel	303
6.7	Egyptian knickknacks from the Tell el-Far'ah cemetery	304
6.8	A pithos burial at Tell es-Sa'idiya	305
6.9	The miner's shrine at Timna and the rock stela above it, from the days of Ramesses III	308
6.10	Left, a bronze plaque from LB I Hazor depicting a local dignitary; right, the LB II statue of the reigning storm-god Ba'al, found in the acropolis ceremonial complex	311

6.11	Plan of the Hazor acropolis ceremonial palace or temple; below, the palace destruction layer (left) and the monolithic podium in the ceremonial stairway leading from the lower city	313
6.12	Hazor: above, Area C shrine and general plan, showing its location at the rear of the domestic quarter; below, general view of the Area H tower temple (looking southwest), detail of offering table and reconstruction	315
6.13	Three categories of Megiddo ivories: bodily care (top row), power (middle strips) and leisure (bottom)	319
6.14	Bet Shemesh: finds from the fourteenth-century palace: a Cypriot juglet, bronze arrowheads and straw-tip, a commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III, a plaque figurine and two Minoan cups	323
6.15	The Lachish Stratum VI acropolis temple and a drawing of a gold plaque found in the temple, showing a nude goddess astride a war-horse.	325
6.16	(a) Plan and isometric view of the shrine at Deir 'Alla cella, (b) ceramic cult vessels and (c) inscribed clay plaques and faience vessel bearing the name of Tawosret	327
6.17	Akko, Persian Garden: Tomb No. 3 and selected finds from the cemetery, including a bronze mirror, a trident, tongs and a sword, Cypriot Base-Ring I-II jugs and White Slip II bowls, an Egyptian ring and merchants' weights	333
6.18	Mycenean pottery from a built tomb at Tel Dan	337
6.19	A biconical jug/amphora from Tel Yin'am and a jug from Tel el-Far'ah (South), bearing characteristic decorative panels that show horned animals and palm trees	348

PREFACE

The first to broach the possibility of writing this study were David Wengrow and Norman Yoffee, who encouraged me to submit a proposal to the Cambridge World Archaeology editorial board. I am grateful to them for the initiative, and to the board for their comments and encouragement at the very first stages of what was clearly an ambitious challenge. The main body of my work was structured around a three-year series of undergraduate seminars, each devoted to one of the three main divisions of the book – Early, Middle and Late Bronze. To the many students who participated in this seminar go my thanks for asking new questions, following leads and for generally serving as a sounding-board for half-baked ideas. David Ilan, Uri Davidovich, Felix Höflmayer and an anonymous reviewer offered valuable comments on parts or the whole of the manuscript. Many others are to be thanked for their moral and intellectual support and for discussion of various facets of the work: the postgraduate staff of the Bet Yerah Archaeological Project – Sarit Paz, Mark Iserlis, Yael Rotem, Hai Ashkenazi and Alon Arad – and Shlomo Bunimovitz, Matt Adams, Yuval Yekutieli, Raz Kletter, Mario Martin, Dafna Langutt, Mel Kennedy, Yorke Rowan, Morag Kersel, Jack Green, Giulio Palumbi, Elisabetta Boaretto, Hermann Genz, Meredith Chesson, Dana Behrman, Gideon Solimany and whomever I happened to bump into during my long hours at the Albright Institute and Rockefeller (IAA) libraries (where I am indebted to Silvia Krapiwko and Aryeh Rochman for countless cups of coffee and conversation). Susan Pollock was a kind host for a brief but productive stint at the Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology, Freie Universität, in 2016, and Sarah Fairman and Matt Adams invited me to a research associateship at the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, providing a quiet and congenial venue for the final stages of writing.

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There is little that is original in this study: my intellectual debt thus extends as far back as the beginnings of Levantine archaeology and as wide as the scholarly community that sustains it. Nonetheless, if I were to identify the crucibles in which my approach and understanding of Bronze Age archaeology was shaped, it would have to include the excavations in which I participated as an under- and post-graduate student (ancient Jerusalem with Yigal Shiloh, Deir el-Balah with Trude Dothan, Tel Batash with Ami Mazar and Tell Qasis with Amnon Ben-Tor), my first publication project (working up the EBA strata of Tel Dan under Avraham Biran) and my first proper job (editing the publications of colleagues at the Israel Department of Antiquities under the guidance of Ayala Sussman). The community of scholars that has coalesced around the study of the Early Bronze Age, founded at the Emmaus meeting convened by Pierre de Miroschedji in 1986, and sustained through countless ICAANE and ARCANE workshops, has also had a marked impact on my work, along with the Kura–Araxes devotees in the Caucasus and scattered across four continents, whom I have come to know and appreciate through our work at Tel Bet Yerah. Whatever is sound and trustworthy in this volume comes from the work of these and many others; its lacunae, misrepresentations and interpretive excesses are all my own.

In these days of online libraries and information fatigue, much of our work takes place at home, battling the distractions of a task-laden screen. I should therefore end with apologies and gratitude to those who had to endure me at home, listen to endless complaints (and verbal abuse of electronic devices, slow connections and incalitrant websites) and offer moral support, even as they were engaged in their own productive labors: Hannah, Jacek and Thomas, and, if only sporadically, Adi, Ofer and Ayal.

The simplified transliteration of place names in this volume follows varying regional conventions and common usage.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1922, representatives of the British, French and American Schools of archaeology in Jerusalem, John Garstang, W.J. Phythian-Adams, Louis Vincent and W.F. Albright, hammered out a new, four-part chronological scheme for the archaeology of Palestine. First published by the *Bulletin* of the American Schools of Oriental Research,¹ the new scheme – composed of Stone, Bronze, Iron and Arab ages with several subdivisions – was soon printed in Palestine Exploration Fund's *Quarterly Statement*² and the Dominican friars' *Revue Biblique*.³ Although its subheadings were almost immediately jettisoned by the committee members themselves (including the designation of an Early, Middle and Late "Palestinian" period for the entire stretch between 1200 BC and AD 636), the new scheme's adherence to the European prehistoric Three-Age system – Stone, Bronze and Iron – quickly became the universal standard for archaeologists working in the area administered by the League of Nations Mandates of Palestine and Syria. This was hardly a trivial or obvious choice: Vincent⁴ had previously argued vigorously for the terms "Indigenous," "Canaanite," "Aegeo-Canaanite," "Israelite" and "Judeo-Hellenic," vying with the German school's "Prehistoric," "Canaanite," "Israelite" and "Jewish," and R.A.S. Macalister's "Pre-Semitic" and "Semitic I–IV." But times had changed: Ottoman administration and an active German archaeological presence had been supplanted, in the wake of the First World War, by British and French occupations, and the terms of the League of Nations Mandates (under which "advanced" nations were to administer former Ottoman territories until they were prepared to stand on their own) promised a new era of scientific research, spearheaded by European and American scholars. Although all four members of the self-appointed committee were firmly committed to the biblical paradigm in Palestinian archaeology, they clearly realized that by establishing a neutral, technological frame of reference, the validity and independence of the archaeological evidence produced by excavation would be enhanced. Moreover, there was nothing to fear; archaeology had, so far, validated the existence of biblical peoples and

cultures. As J.F. McMurdy had put it, in his introduction to H.V. Hilprecht's *Recent Research in Bible Lands* (1896):

It is the province of Oriental archaeology to deal with the peoples and countries and languages of the Bible so as to bring out their true relations to Bible teaching. They were formerly regarded as the mere framework of the picture. Now we are learning that they make up the groundwork, its coloring, and its perspective.⁵

But choosing the three-age terminology implied something more profound, complementing the very terms of the Mandates themselves: modernity was being defined through its framing of the past. Each epoch now occupied a fixed place in the evolution of mankind, from Stone to Bronze to Iron (incorporating Rome and Byzantium) to the historical “Arab” era and, thence, to the modern era of European hegemony (AD 1700 according to the articles of the two Mandates). Archaeology was no longer a theological pastime, but part of the nation-building project embodied in the terms of the European Mandates. Thus, even as archaeologists staked out neutral ground, science itself was positioned as political.

Despite its broad use, the concept of Bronze Age archaeology would not have carried much significance in the Near East during much of the twentieth century. Egyptian and Mesopotamian archaeology was dominated by the discourse of state formation, urbanization (in Mesopotamia) and dynastic succession. Syrian archaeology was fragmented, with the Jezireh and Euphrates Valley largely linked to the Mesopotamian sequence, western Syria to the independent ‘Amuq sequence (Periods A–J), and the dry-farming belt between them developing its own terminology, based on that used by the excavators of Tell Mardikh. Only in Palestine (east and west of the Jordan) and Lebanon would the term have signified much, and that largely of a typological and chronological nature. Its European connotations – large metal hoards, burial circles and the emergence of powerful chiefs and chiefdoms – would hardly have been recognized in the local Levantine sequence. In recent years, however, the Bronze Age, as a significant epoch in human history rather than a mere “chunk of time,”⁶ has undergone a rehabilitation of sorts, so that it is understood to encompass Childe’s materialist approach to social change, in which the Bronze Age is the setting for the “Urban Revolution” and the emergence of states,⁷ and broad-canvas conceptualizations of the movement of people, materials, technologies and cosmologies across space.⁸ The Bronze Age as used here, therefore, connotes an era during which the Levant was affected by the earliest movements toward urbanization, political centralization, and the coalescence of charismatically led kingdoms and empires, and by the powerful forces of long-distance interaction, exchange, and cultural interference – and indeed of resistance – spawned by these movements. Bronze itself, while not a defining feature of many “Bronze Age” societies (it arrives in the

Levant only in the late third millennium BCE), is perceived as emblematic, insofar as it required the exploitation and alloying of scarce resources of copper and tin found at the margins of the ancient Near East. It thus symbolizes resourcefulness, connectivity and the ability to wield power over great distances, which may be said to be the characteristic attributes of fourth to second millennium leaders, kings and gods.

The end of the Bronze Age is often perceived as a distant precursor to modern “disenchantment”: the elegance of bronze, mined in hallowed locations and cast by skilled craftsmen in exquisite shapes, was replaced by the coarse and brutal utility of iron, gouged out of the mountains of the north and worked by blacksmiths; heroes were replaced by armies; gifts gave way to commodities; ambassadors, to traders. The world itself was carved into antagonistic nations and their warring gods. Like any other simplification, the “end of the Bronze Age” trope is best seen as a reflection of the concerns of those who employ it. At ground level, change was generally incremental, with new technologies added to old, and old ideas reworked into new structures. In this sense, it may be claimed that the Bronze Age never ended at all.

What, then, is Bronze Age archaeology? It is the archaeology of a stretch of time during which long-standing institutions came into existence that still structure human societies: cities, states, markets, military power, legal codes and institutionalized religion. This period also witnessed the human transformation of the physical landscape, bringing large swathes of the countryside under cultivation, introducing widespread horticulture and implanting the artificial, layered raised mound (*tell*) – a strategic node of economic and political power and *axis mundi* between lower worlds and heavenly deities – as a permanent fixture in the countryside. Finally, it saw the integration of the Levant into a Mediterranean world, establishing corridors and networks of contact and interaction that endure, in some senses, to modern times.

THE LEVANT

The same political circumstances that shaped the 1922 chronological chart composed by the Jerusalem “Group of Four” can be held responsible for the geographic scope of this volume. It includes primarily the area of the British Mandate and a portion of the fragmented French one: Palestine on both sides of the Jordan River, the Lebanese massif and coast, the area between them, southwest of Damascus, and – when directly relevant to the Levant – portions of the Sinai peninsula. The volume mostly excludes sites and regions covered in the *Archaeology of Syria*, published in this series,⁹ except where they are crucial to the understanding of more southerly developments.

This narrow definition of the Levant, which excludes most of modern Syria, is nonetheless geographically sustainable, since it describes an internally diverse region set apart from its geographic surroundings by deserts on the east, south

and southwest, by the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and by the edge of the Lebanese massif, marked by the Homs gap, to the north (Figure 1.1). The Levant as defined here is also quite closely congruent with historical Canaan, at least from the mid-second millennium BCE onward.¹⁰ I will therefore occasionally use the term “Canaan” as a replacement for the unwieldy “southern Levant,” and the term “Canaanite” to describe the residents of Canaan (albeit with no strict ethnic connotation). The peculiar geography of the Levant is reflected in ancient local characterizations of the cardinal directions: the inhabitants of Canaan faced the eastern horizon – *qedem* (literally, that which is before one), which denotes the place of origin in temporal, geographic and cosmic senses. To their conceptual right – *yamin*, or south – lay the deserts of Negev or Teiman; to their conceptual left – *sm'al*, or *zafon* (north) – were the Amanus mountains and, by extension, the eastern Anatolian massif; and at their back lay *yam*, the Great Sea. For most of the Bronze Age, therefore, east would be the source of wisdom (light) and the place of ancestral origin;¹¹ south would denote the domain of nomads and, beyond them, the fabulous wealth of Egypt; north would symbolize the mountainous seat of the storm-god and the source of precious metals; and west would mark the edge of chaos and the dwelling place of the monsters of the deep (*tehom*).

Internally, the Levant may be divided into several dominant longitudinal units:

- (a) The coastal plain, which is extremely narrow until Ras el-Naqurah, broadens toward the Akko Valley, narrows again along the Carmel ridge, and then opens to the south, along the Sharon and Philistia coasts and inwards to the Shephelah (lowland) plains; a series of north–south kurkar sandstone ridges defines the central part of the coast, allowing easy access to groundwater in the troughs but also creating seasonal and permanent marshes at some locations.
- (b) The central highlands, composed of the Alpine and high-Mediterranean Lebanese massif, the upper and lower Galilee, and the Samarian and Judean hills. Softwood forests of the higher altitudes (cedar of Lebanon and Aleppo pine) give way to *pistacia* and evergreen oak open forest with accompanying garrigue vegetation that form a fairly intractable barrier to cultivation and grazing on the western flanks of the central highlands; the semiarid eastern flanks merge into the steppic landscape of the southern and middle Jordan valley.
- (c) The Dead Sea Rift Valley, which includes the Bika', the upper and the lower Jordan Valleys (the Lake Hula, Lake Kinneret and Dead Sea basins), and the Arabah Valley; the valley is arid to steppic in its south and central parts, while the northern Jordan (Hula) Valley and Bika' are prone to poor drainage and the expansion of wetlands. The convergence of water (the Jordan and Yarmuk Rivers as well as major springs and oases along the

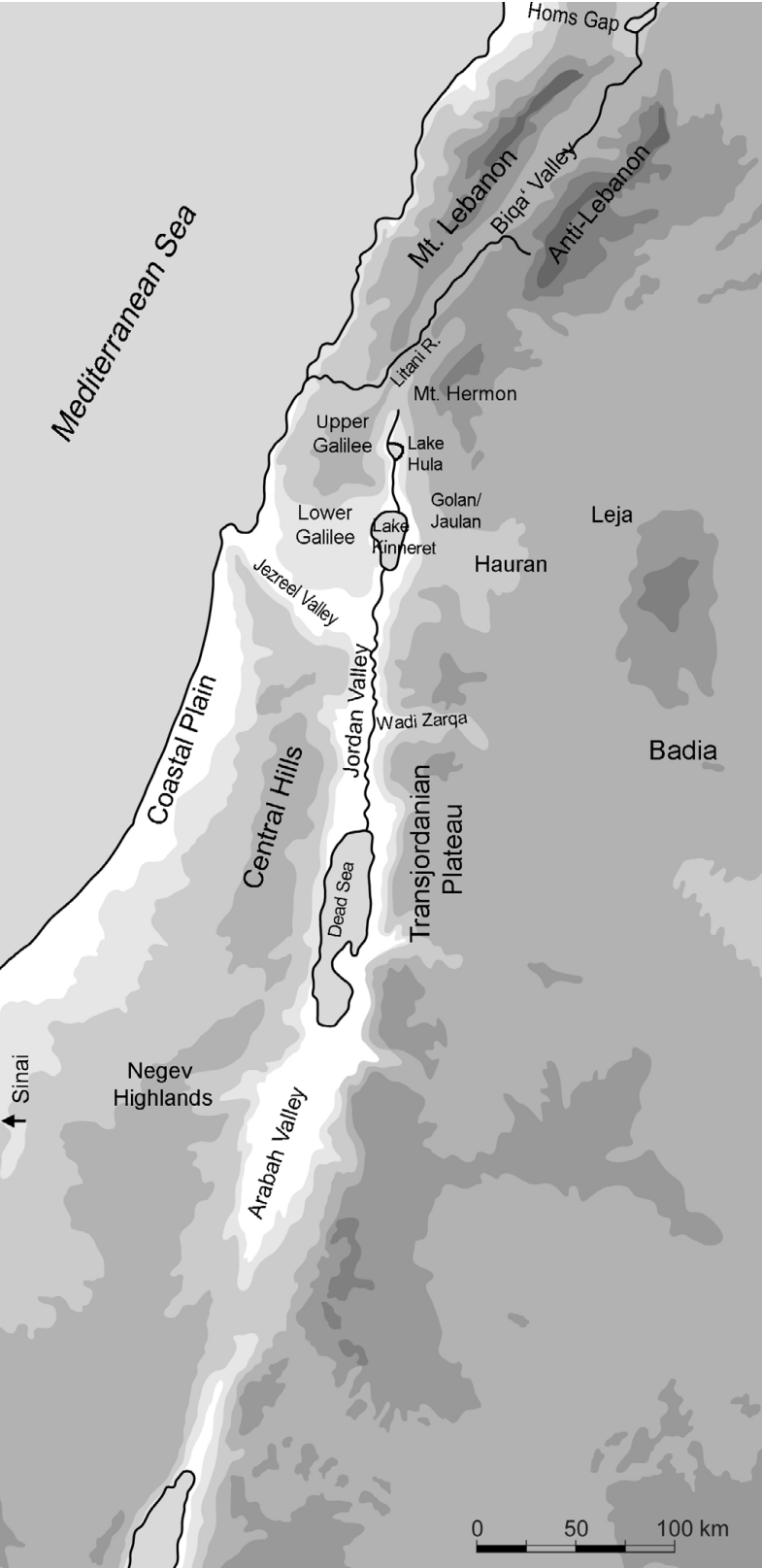


Figure 1.1 Map of the Levant.

flanks of the valley) and warm temperatures along the central part of the valley have attracted human settlement from earliest times, permitting the valley to function both as a corridor for people and ideas and as a locus of independent development. The “bewildering diversity” of the Bīqā‘ has been described at length by Horden and Purcell,¹² who note its complex ecology and “extremely local” climatic conditions, which they view as representative of many parts of the Mediterranean.

- (d) The eastern mountains and tablelands, from the Anti-Lebanon mountains to the Transjordanian plateau. The basaltic Leja and the western Hauran and Golan are well watered but difficult to farm, while the area suitable for dry farming in the plateau, which is bisected by many deeply etched wadi systems, extends no more than 50 kilometers east of the Jordan, and about 25 kilometers in the south.

These units are bisected by several transverse basins, formed by geological faults, and small river valleys that afforded passage inland from the coast, from the highlands to the rift valley, and from the rift valley to the eastern plateau. Settlements are often found at the coastal river mouths, which afforded relatively safe anchorages along a seacoast with few natural bays, and along the wadi catchments leading inland or flanking the rift valley. The most significant transverse basin is the broad Jezreel Valley, extending from the eastern flank of the Carmel ridge to the Bet Shean and Jordan Valleys. Several important tells – chief among them the much-excavated site of Megiddo – are situated at the points of access to the valley. In addition, there are several small but significant inland valleys in the central and eastern highlands. The southern plains merge into the loess plains of the northern Negev and the Arad-Beersheba basins, which lie at the southernmost boundary of the dry-farming belt under the best climatic conditions, and beyond it in harder times. South of the Beersheba basin are the semiarid to arid central Negev Highlands, well suited for sheep and goat grazing, but containing many pockets of soil and water catchment that allow seasonal agriculture with simple water-harvesting techniques.

From the foregoing description, it is clear that the Levant offered its early inhabitants a diverse patchwork of environmental affordances and potentialities. These would have encouraged the development of local specializations in productive strategies, that is, differential exploitation of areas suited – by virtue of their topography, soils and moisture regime – to different kinds of agricultural activity, to husbandry of small or large cattle, or to the extraction of unique resources. Knowledge of the diverse opportunities offered by the landscape would have helped minimize risk for each community, but worked against the existence of large economic institutions. Locally integrated systems of specialized producers could be created, but these would not have accumulated the huge surpluses characterizing, for example, the river-valley civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, or the extensive dry-farming and pastoral belts that supported

Bronze Age economies of scale in Syria. The flip side of this absence of scale was the relative long-term security of Levantine existence: the ecological mosaic of which the Levant is composed ensures that for every niche lost, for example, to minor climatic change, a new niche will be won. Thus, a period of extended desiccation (drought), which would harm the southern dry-farming belt, might release former marshlands in the rift valley or along the coast for cultivation, or open up forest land for horticulture or grazing. Taking the long view, the economic stakes in the southern and central Levant were relatively low, and subsistence uncertainty, though always present due to yearly fluctuations, could be overcome by maintaining flexibility.¹³ In view of these considerations, the role of climate in the history of Bronze Age settlement fluctuations in the Levant should, as a rule, not be seen as decisive: climate change – which was never drastic in the Holocene¹⁴ – could affect local affordances and strategies, but it cannot explain major shifts in settlement, social organization or political hegemony.

The distinct geographic borders of the Levant and its internal diversity should not imply that it was isolated from its neighbors, or that it could never show any internal unity. The Levant was always a corridor, conduit and receptacle for people, materials, technologies, ideologies and experiments in social organization emanating from points north, east and south. Moreover, its internal relief and divisions did not permit complete isolation and autarky in any part of it. However, the flow of persons, commodities or ideas was always filtered by the attrition caused by distance, hardships along the route, the mechanisms of cultural translation, and the creativity of the receiving communities, who should never be seen as passive subjects whose destiny has been preordained by geography. Estimating relative travel distances in antiquity¹⁵ is instructive: about three weeks would have been required to traverse the Levant itself from north to south; Egypt lay ten days or a fortnight away from the coastal centers, while settlements of the northern Lebanese coast were perhaps a week's travel from the towns of western Syria. Sea travel occupied similar spans of time, weather permitting. Connectivity was therefore always an option, but archaeology shows that it was an option that was exercised only intermittently. People in the Levant could initiate contact with neighboring zones or refrain from it; people from the Nile Valley or western Syria could migrate to or pass through the Levant, but could also bypass it. If the Levant – as is often stated – was a land bridge between western Asia, Arabia and Africa, it was a self-sufficient, long and densely inhabited one, in which people, ideas and technologies could be received, reinvented or retooled as they made their way across it.

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN LEVANTINE BRONZE AGE ARCHAEOLOGY

As illustrating the Old Testament literature, or its words and thoughts, archeology is concerned with the peoples of Bible lands, their local habitations,

their languages, their manners and customs, their political constitution, their mental and moral characteristics. As auxiliary to Old Testament history, it considers the same things genetically, in their bearing upon the preparation of Israel for the place assigned to it in the order of Providence. (McMurdy 1896: 5)

While all early Anglo-European excavation in the Ottoman East, beginning in the early nineteenth century, was motivated by the quest for the wisdom and wealth of the ancient empires of Egypt and Babylon, the “birthright and sacred legacy of all civilized people” (James Henry Breasted),¹⁶ antiquarian interest in the Levant, and particularly in Palestine, was primarily motivated by the desire to uncover, recover and possess the biblical past. The first systematic attempt to superimpose a scriptural geography on Arab/Ottoman Palestine, by the American scholars Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, had an immense effect on nineteenth-century European explorers, who determined “to lay open the treasures of Biblical Geography and History . . . treasures which have lain for ages unexplored, and had become so covered with the dust and rubbish of many centuries, that their very existence was forgotten.”¹⁷ Initially, this program was effected by intensive surveys, capped by the monumental Survey of Western Palestine and the partial survey of Eastern Palestine and the Jaulan.¹⁸ In Lebanon, the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut, established in 1868, exhibited pottery and other artifacts from private collections, thus offering early archaeologists an opportunity to view prehistoric ceramic industries from the Levant and Cyprus.¹⁹ Systematic Bronze Age archaeology in the Levant began with the first stratigraphic excavation in Ottoman Palestine, conducted at Tell el-Hesi (then thought to be ancient Lachish) between 1890 and 1892, first by W.M. Flinders Petrie and then by Frederick Bliss, son of the founder of the American University in Beirut Daniel Bliss (Figure 1.2).²⁰ Petrie and Bliss’s pioneering understanding of the nature of multilayered mounded sites and the relation between building strata and ceramic typology paved the way for the first series of excavations at pre-Israelite “biblical” sites – i.e., mounds identified with specific places mentioned in the Old Testament and associated with “Semite,” “Canaanite” or “Amorite” predecessors. These included Ta’anakh (Tell Ta’anek) (excavated in 1902–1904), Gezer (Tell el-Jizr) (1902–1909), Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesellim) (1903–1905), Jericho (Tell es-Sultan) (1907–1909) and Shechem (Tell Balata) (1913–1914). Following the First World War (1914–1918), when the British and French “opened up” Palestine and Syria for excavation, the trend of excavating at large “biblical” mounds was resumed, with long-term projects initiated by American institutions at Megiddo, Tel Bet Shean (Tell el-Husn) and Tell Beit Mirsim; British work at several sites in the southern plain (Tell el-‘Ajjul, Tell Jemmeh and southern Tell el-Far‘ah), at Jericho and at Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir); and numerous salvage excavations in Bronze Age sites and cemeteries – occasioned by the rapid development of Palestine – conducted by



Figure 1.2 The first systematic excavation at a Bronze Age site in the Levant: Tell el-Hesi, 1892. Courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

the newly formed Department of Antiquities of Palestine and published in its *Quarterly*.

Departments or Directorates of Antiquities and European expeditions were also active in the northern Levant, under the French mandate, and in Transjordan, after it was separated from western Palestine in 1921. However, the intensity of archaeological investigation never reached that of western Palestine. Bronze Age excavations in Mandate Lebanon include the long-term French excavations at Byblos (which began in 1921 and continued until 1965, well after Lebanon's independence), whereas the Bronze Age mounds of Transjordan (e.g., Pella, Bab edh-Dhra' or Tell el-Umeiri) were excavated only after Jordan's independence, in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The relative imbalance in the intensity of archaeological research in different parts of the Levant continued beyond Mandate times, into the period of national independence and conflict, so that the current map of excavation and research is very much a product of the nature of the different states created in the postwar era and of the impact of numerous wars, between and within nations and territories. Factors that have played a crucial role in the extent of archaeological activity include cultural and religious motivation, national priorities, economic development, and military conflict and occupation. Thus, among the states and national territories in the modern Levant, Israel is the

most intensively excavated, especially along its densely developed coast, and maintains the highest level of research activity due to its stable economy and administration, strong ties to the western academic tradition and the allure of its biblical past. Moreover, because of the synergy between Israel's nation-building project and the archaeological project of recovering a (Jewish) indigenous past, collaboration between archaeologists, the government and the military has usually been close. There are more than 25,000 registered antiquities sites in Israel proper (within its pre-1967 borders). Most of the country has been subjected to systematic surveys, the results of which are largely accessible in print and online. About 300 salvage and 50 research excavations by local and overseas institutions are licensed annually, including scores of sites and cemeteries with Bronze Age remains.²¹ Since 1967, Israel has maintained a military occupation of the Palestinian national territories in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and was responsible for their archaeological administration until the mid-1990s, after which portions of the territory reverted to Palestinian administrative control. These regions too were intensively surveyed and excavated by Israeli institutions, who were always prepared to expand the scope of their work to match the changing boundaries of political and military control. Between 1967 and 1990, some 6,000 archaeological sites were recorded and hundreds excavated.²² In recent years the extent of Israeli research has diminished (with the exception of occupied East Jerusalem), and a politically unstable Palestinian Authority has fielded only a handful of salvage and research projects in Bronze Age sites.²³

Because of the strong link between pre-classical archaeology in Israel and the study of biblical history and texts, research priorities in Israeli academia have shifted over the past seven decades, accommodating the shifting frontier between "reliable" and "mythical" historical traditions. In the first three or four decades of nationhood, the biblical archaeology paradigm established by W.F. Albright and his school was dominant among Israeli archaeologists. Under this paradigm, it was asserted that biblical history, extra-biblical texts and archaeology could be reconciled from the beginning of the second millennium BCE onward, and that this reconciliation could best be effected through meticulous stratigraphic excavations and the creation of cultural typologies at large archaeological mounds. The first major tell excavation in Israel was conducted by Yigael Yadin at Hazor (Tell el-Qedah) in 1955–1958 and its results were considered to confirm a portrait of second-millennium Canaan that melded biblical and extra-biblical sources into a consistent picture of "the Patriarchal period."²⁴ The late second-millennium conquest of Canaan by Joshua was also considered by Yadin and others as historically accurate and archaeologically verifiable. In recent decades, however, a critical shift in biblical-historical studies combined with new interpretations of ancient settlement patterns based on extensive surveys (conducted largely in the occupied West Bank) have led many scholars to relegate both the patriarchal narrative

and the Israelite conquest to the status of historical fable. The frontier between conservative and deconstructionist archaeologist/historians – that is, between those who uphold the historical authenticity of traditions relating to the Israelite ethnogenesis and state formation and those who reject it – has shifted, for the most part, to the first millennium, leaving the second millennium outside the mainstream debate and in a state of relative intellectual quiescence (the third millennium, or Early Bronze Age, had never been seen as more than a prelude to biblical history).²⁵ Nonetheless, a strong tradition of data accumulation and description (excavation, archiving and publication) continues to contribute incrementally to the archaeological reservoir, while interpretive approaches remain underdetermined, and tend to combine political history, historical geography and elements of processual archaeology's social and geographic theory.

The archaeology of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan offers, since its establishment in 1946, a fascinating counterpoint to that of modern Israel/Palestine, insofar as Transjordan had largely lost its status as part of the Holy Land and its history was integrated in the narrative of "Hashemite-centric Jordanian Arab inclusivity."²⁶ Focused on an administrative and economic approach to antiquities (upward of 13,000 sites are currently registered on the outsourced MEGA-Jordan GIS platform), Jordan has served as a staging ground for old-school culture-history and biblical archaeology projects, as well as more theoretically ambitious attempts to test the methods and interpretations emerging from Anglo-European processual and post-processual archaeology. Thus, it was Kathleen Kenyon who effectively introduced modern stratigraphic methodology to Levantine archaeology while excavating Jordanian-controlled Jericho and Jerusalem in the 1950s and 1960s, and her protégé and younger colleague J.B. Hennessy, excavating in Amman and Ghassul and establishing the long-standing project at Pella, who bridged the transition from culture-history to processual archaeology. Recent decades have seen a considerable expansion in the number and quality of Bronze Age projects. Thus, although fewer in number and extent than their counterparts across the river, excavations in Jordan have a high profile in the anglophone archaeological literature on late prehistory,²⁷ including the Bronze Age.

Both the geography and political history of Lebanon have conspired to limit the extent of archaeological work there since independence. The two principal regions with a rich occupational history – the Lebanese coast and the Biqa' – suffered from the severe effects of the destruction visited by external and internal conflicts (the 1948–1949 war, the civil war of 1975–1990, the recurring conflicts with Israel between 1976 and 2006 and the huge influx of Syrian refugees since 2011) and by the more recent unbridled and unregulated development in and around the coastal towns. While the main thrust of Lebanese archaeology, as shaped by founding figures such as Maurice Chéhab, targeted its Phoenician and classical past, the important Bronze Age axis with

Egypt – highlighted by the Byblos excavations of Dunand, the scarab studies of William Ward and the German-led excavations at Kamid el-Loz – remained an important theme. Recent decades have been marked by swift economic growth and a burgeoning archaeological scene that has revived the study of the Bronze Age coastal towns and their maritime contacts with Egypt and with the northern and southern Levant.²⁸

This brief overview of the conditions of archaeological research in the Levant underscores the highly variable quality and quantity of evidence currently in hand, which is impacted not only by the different pace of excavation in different parts of the region but by different methods employed in them. Throughout the region, early excavations stressed broad architectural exposures, but provided very low resolution in terms of exhaustiveness (the proportion of finds retrieved and reported) and attribution of finds to specific contexts. Later, disciplinary boundaries between “prehistoric/anthropological” and “biblical/historical” orientations implied vastly different emphases in excavation and, *inter alia*, attention to environmental data. Salvage work, which is responsible for the largest bulk of Bronze Age data in recent decades, is highly inconsistent, often depending on the personal initiative of the excavators and constrained by factors outside their control. The impact of analytical work and natural science methods in recent years has been felt chiefly in improved chronological resolution and in the context of specific research designs, often linked to broader historical agendas.²⁹ These differences will be felt in the chapters that follow, although I have attempted to mitigate them by focusing on the most reliable – and often more recent – reports.

Broadly speaking, then, the archaeology of the Levant has recently begun to release itself from the grip of the biblical culture–history paradigm of its late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century progenitors, to become engaged with wider concerns in the history of the Mediterranean and Western Asia. At the same time, rapid development in all parts of the region, unleashed by the ready availability of cash and the decline of states in the face of free-market ideologies, has resulted in unplanned – and largely unprocessed – salvage work, which continues to pile on new data of uneven quality. In the following section I will outline the themes and approaches that inform my selection and presentation of the archaeological material in Chapters 2–6.

PRINCIPAL THEMES

The Bronze Age trajectory described in Chapters 2–6 covers two major divisions of the Levant’s early history: the first division begins with the transition from the Chalcolithic to the south Levantine Early Bronze Age, c. 3700 BCE, which is broadly seen as a significant turning-point aligned with broader regional trends that led to the beginning of urbanization in Mesopotamia and the origins of Egyptian civilization. It will encompass, in Chapter 2, the

establishment of the Mediterranean village economy in the fourth millennium and the first Egyptian intrusion, c. 3200–3050 BCE; in Chapter 3, the crystallization of fortified centers of population and of urban ideologies in the first half of the third millennium; and in Chapter 4, the devolvement of these centers into rural–pastoral settlement at the margins of urban Syria in the second half of the millennium. The second division will cover, in Chapter 5, the regeneration of urban life in the Middle Bronze Age and the rise of the Canaanite polities as autonomous, often powerful, entities between 2000 and 1600 BCE, and their relations with the rural and pastoral margins, and, in Chapter 6, their shifting fortunes under Egyptian domination in the Late Bronze Age (until c. 1150 BCE), with islands of Bronze Age culture surviving to the very end of the millennium. The two trajectories of the third and second millennium, toward centralization of power and then away from it, appear to represent, each in its way, an inherent tendency of people in the Levant to at once emulate the political ideologies of neighboring regions and resist their practical application. These acts of translation and resistance serve as a reflection of, and a commentary on, the nature of the political, social and religious ideologies in the regions of origin.

The choice of the term “trajectory,” a ballistic metaphor, for the evolution of Bronze Age societies could imply that the course of events was determined by prior conditions, that societies were launched on a course over which they had no control. But that is not my intent. Rather, I suggest that the two (Early Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age) trajectories share priorities and values that encouraged certain courses of action and discouraged others. These values and priorities, insofar as they were embedded in the materiality of Bronze Age societies, are accessible to archaeologists. They were integral to the evolution of Levantine communities and cultures, and not imposed from the outside.

In view of the huge quantity of data amassed over more than a century of intensive and virtually uninterrupted investigation, it would have been a fool’s errand (or a delusional ambition) to attempt to itemize every relevant Bronze Age find in the Levant; rather, my goal has been to string together sufficient evidence to support a narrative, against which additional – and indeed future – discoveries may be measured. In constructing my narrative, I have followed a traditional bottom-up, or inductive, approach to interpretation, awarding precedence to excavations over surveys and to contextualized assemblages over broad typologies. I have tried to understand how archaeological artifacts and structures mediated and configured human intent, and how they function as “black boxes,” encapsulating ancient practices, non-discursive knowledge, and material resources.³⁰ This begins at the level of the household, its contents and its internal and external spatial arrangements, but includes things like ceramic industries or prestige crafts, which should be viewed as expressions of technical knowledge, material choices, relations of production and consumer expectations. Studying the affordances of archaeological artifacts and structures – that

is, the kinds of function, use, or movement either enabled or constrained by the physical qualities of the excavated buildings and objects – reveals how societies were produced and reproduced in the movements, behaviors, bodily gestures and sensorial environments of everyday life.³¹

The study of settlement patterns, public works and the accumulation of staple or prestige goods by individuals or institutions attests to the distribution of social power in heterarchical structures or its concentration in hierarchical ones.³² Likewise, the study of ceremonial and commemorative contexts – domestic shrines, temples, tombs and cemeteries – may reveal how legitimization and consent were sought through the establishment of mutual obligations and debts between the living, the dead, and the gods.³³ All societies and cultures are connected to others and use them to define themselves and to confirm their self-value;³⁴ archaeology can reveal where and when interaction and exchange occurred and how people, ideas, technologies and goods crossed borders, to be refracted throughout society or deployed strategically by elites.

The discerning reader will have noticed that several important aspects of traditional Ancient Near Eastern scholarship are not included in my overview, such as Bronze Age historical geography, texts, or ceramic and architectural typologies. These are touched upon, where relevant, but are not central to my analysis. Contemporary textual attestations directly relevant to Levantine society and culture are fragmentary, oblique and ambiguous for the early part of the Bronze Age. In the second millennium, they form more coherent corpora, but even so, the morality tales, letters, lexical texts and economic records that have chanced to survive the ravages of time cannot be directly parlayed into the language of modern archaeological interpretation. In fact, their interpretation often leans on the archaeological evidence. Therefore, to avoid the perils of circular reasoning, I have preferred to introduce texts sparingly, citing their primary publications.

In contrast to many traditional archaeological surveys, this study begins at a point in late prehistory when the foundations of sedentary society had already been laid, and when neighboring regions were about to enter a phase of rapid and transformative change. The last part of the introduction will therefore be devoted to a brief recapitulation of Neolithic and Chalcolithic developments in the Levant, and to an archaeological synopsis of Egypt and Mesopotamia at the cusp of the Bronze Age.

THE LEVANT BEFORE THE BRONZE AGE

During the early, pre-ceramic, Neolithic (c. 10,000–6500 BCE), the Levantine corridor settlements were full participants in the revolutionary changes in food production, pyrotechnology and human settlement that culminated in the domestication of the most important economic plants (cereals, pulses and flax) and meat-producing animals (sheep/goat, cattle and pigs) and the perfecting of

food processing and storage technologies.³⁵ Sedentary villages were established in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (c. 9600–8500 BCE), among them the Jordan Valley sites of Netiv Hagdud, Gilgal and Jericho with its famed stone wall, ditch and tower. In the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B–C (c. 8500–6500 BCE), in tandem with the advance of crop and animal domestication, villages grew to a considerable size, especially on those of the Late PPNB on the east side of the rift valley (e.g., ‘Ain Ghazal and Basta), showing dense rectilinear architecture, extensive use of lime-plaster floors, the installment of lined storage bins and the earliest examples of spaces designated for ritual performances. Elaborate treatment of the dead and the proliferation of subfloor burials point to the centrality of the house, of household or communal ancestors and of fixed sites of settlement in this period, leading to the earliest examples of mounding – the repeated occupation of sites in resource-rich locations: near springs, arable land and nodes of interregional exchange. This rapid expansion was followed by a late Pre-Pottery Neolithic contraction – the forerunner of several trajectories of expansion and fissioning in the prehistoric Levant, representing a dynamic of the economic failure of – or societal aversion to – large concentrations of population and to the institutions of social control that may have been required to make them sustainable.

Late Neolithic developments of the seventh to fifth millennia (see Table 1.1) were seminal to the emergence of the Mediterranean village economy in the Levant. Initially sharing some of the characteristics of pre-urban Ubaid horizon of Mesopotamia and Syria, which David Wengrow has dubbed “the first global village,”³⁶ Late Neolithic villages in the Levant perfected the working and transformation of clay into ceramic vessels and elaborate figurines and began to create and use carved stone seals to mark stored goods as their own. They also began to breed cattle for milking, marking the beginning of the so-called secondary products revolution.³⁷ Ultimately, however, Levantine Late Neolithic sidestepped the path taken by the Ubaid villages to urbanism, avoiding the associated evils of expansion, cultural uniformity and the pressure to increase productivity, so that while south Mesopotamia and the Jezireh moved toward intensification and centralization,³⁸ the Levant shifted gears and created a Chalcolithic village culture that stands out as one of the rare instances of independent cultural and technological development centered in the southern Levant.

The Ghassulian/Beersheba Chalcolithic of the southern Levant (c. 4500–3800/3600 BCE)³⁹ was a period of remarkable economic adaptations – perhaps aided by benevolent climate patterns – and artistic creativity played out in geographic zones that are usually considered marginal for sedentary settlement: the northern Negev, the southern Jordan Valley, and the Golan (Jaulan) plateau. True, the typical zones of agricultural settlement in both earlier and later eras – the Mediterranean coast, inland valleys and highlands – were also utilized, but settlement there appears either secondary to the

Table 1.1 Synchronization table, Late Neolithic to beginning of EBA

Levantine phase	Levantine radiometric dates ^a (calibrated BCE)	Egypt	Type of interaction and main finds	Egyptian radiometric dates ^b (calibrated BCE)	Mesopotamia
Wadi Rabah	6000(?)–4500	Fayum	Earliest farming	4600	Halaf Ubaid
Chalcolithic	4500 3800/3600	Badarian	Exchange of shells and minerals	4000 3700	Early Uruk
EB I A	3800/3600 (start)	Naqada IB–II	South Levantine traditions at Maadi, Buto Ib; sporadic Egyptian objects at Site H, Taur Ikheineh	3500	Middle Uruk; northward expansion begins

^a Radiocarbon dates based on Braun et al. 2013.

^b Radiocarbon dates based on Dee et al. 2013; Wendrich, Taylor and Southern 2010.

southeasterly centers or – in the central Levant – closer in style and technology to its Neolithic precursors. Thus, it is in the southeastern Jordan Valley and northern Negev that the most sophisticated settlements and productive systems have been excavated, showing evidence for water management in the cultivation of cereals along wadi flood-terraces, for the proliferation of ceramic storage pithoi, for the earliest signs of intensive olive cultivation and for extensive animal husbandry. Houses in Chalcolithic villages were built in compounds, often composed of two or more dwellings and a shared courtyard, with little evidence for ranking between them. Sites of the Beersheba Valley revealed large subterranean systems composed of rooms and corridors that could be used for functional ends, like storage, but which often betrayed evidence of ritual use, serving as repositories for extraordinary objects such as ivory sculptures or basalt bowls and stands. Similar systems were found along the coastal plain, often with no evidence for above-ground settlement.

Cemeteries – separate communities of the dead – became a standard fixture in the Chalcolithic period, supplying evidence for an elaborate burial rite that began with defleshing in a temporary location and final interment of skulls and selected bones in stone or ceramic containers that were placed in natural caves. The containers, or ossuaries, occasionally reached an extraordinary level of sophistication and were accompanied by many burial gifts, including unusual ceramic objects, stone and ivory sculpture and copper artifacts.

Indeed, the salient feature of the Ghassulian/Beersheba Chalcolithic is the remarkable florescence of ritual behavior – as seen in carefully constructed settings for ritual performance within or outside settlements (shrines, temples, processional pathways) and in burial grounds, and in a very rich array of symbolic artifacts that bridge the gap between institutionalized and domestic ritual and ceremony. These range from polychrome wall paintings found at Tuleilat Ghassul to electrum rings found in Wadi Qanah in Samaria, and to elaborate zoomorphic standards cast in a copper-arsenic-antimony alloy obtained from the distant north. The latter were created in what must have been a newly invented lost-wax technique, found in the Judean desert caves of Nahal Mishmar.

Chalcolithic communities expanded the range of long-distance connections, obtaining metals, exotic stones, ivory and shells from sources extending from Armenia to the Red Sea. They also perfected techniques that allowed them to shape and remake the hardest materials – whether stone or metal – into any desired shape. Using this technical knowledge, symbols could be reproduced in any medium – the symbol of the horn, for example, migrates from the rays of the painted star at Ghassul to the ceramic cornet to the copper flask, and thence to naturalistic representation of goat and ibex horns on pottery and stone vessels. The most valued objects appear to be the most sacred and inalienable ones, which are found in ritual deposits as gifts to the dead or to ancestral spirits. Notably, none of these exotic or highly crafted

objects was accumulated or used as “wealth.” Rather, they were distributed in tombs, caves, subterranean shafts and the like, miming the benevolence of nature and ensuring the continued bond of mutual obligations between the living communities and those that lay beyond.

By about 3800 BCE, the Chalcolithic had run its course. The sources of exotic materials seem to have run dry, and the fragmentation of ceramic ossuaries observed in many tombs seems to indicate that ritual knowledge and technical competence was gradually lost.⁴⁰ This remarkable impoverishment of the sensorial environment of the Levantine world – or, to put a more positive spin on it, the rearrangement of economic priorities to reduce the tension between the imagined society (as represented in its elaborate iconography) and real economic conditions – might be distantly related to similar processes in Mesopotamia, in which an increasingly powerful elite may have begun to monopolize beauty, technical skills and fine materials, leaving commoners to pursue their lives in possibly more secure, but certainly more drably uniform, surroundings.

MESOPOTAMIA AND EGYPT ON THE CUSP OF THE BRONZE AGE

Building on the technological and organizational achievements of the earlier, widespread Ubaid village complex, very large settlements began to crystallize in the dry-farming zones of northern Mesopotamia and in the irrigation-dependent southern alluvium during the early fourth millennium BCE. By the mid-fourth millennium, Uruk had emerged as the leading city of the south, with a huge ceremonial core and a population of many thousands, surrounded by a plethora of smaller sites. Other sites in southern Mesopotamia grew as well, never reaching the dimensions of Uruk, but nonetheless establishing southern Mesopotamia as the “heartland of cities.”⁴¹ Viewing Uruk as a dominant economic center in its countryside, historians have posited the emergence of social hierarchies and temples as labor-controlling institutions, creating an influential model of pristine state-formation and urbanization.⁴² Social stratification, craft specialization and the emergence of a literate bureaucracy have been considered correlates of the size and complexity of the Uruk system, as well as a yardstick by which to measure other societies aspiring to the title of city or state.

The Middle Uruk period (c. 3800–3350 BCE) also marks the beginning of the expansion of the “Uruk package” northward along the Euphrates and eastward to the region of Susa in western Iran. It first appears in the form of typical, standardized architecture and the mass-production of simple and functional ceramic bowls and containers, but by the Late Uruk period (c. 3350–3000 BCE), a complete urbanization package appears to have crystallized, composed of town, temple and house plans; construction techniques; material culture assemblages; new forms of social solidarity (of which the

curious absence of cemeteries is symptomatic); and administrative techniques that included intricately carved cylinder seals and a system of clay tokens and clay envelopes impressed with scenes and symbols that was the immediate precursor to cuneiform writing. In rare cases, the entire package was transplanted onto virgin ground, as in the town of Habuba Kabira, on the middle reaches of the Euphrates River. More often, elements of the package were reproduced in new sites or in enclaves created in preexisting sites, reaching the Upper Euphrates Valley in southeastern Anatolia as well as a broad arc of sites from Syria to western Iran. Although little consensus has been reached on the cause of the Uruk expansion – Algaze’s attractive world-system model,⁴³ according to which a resource-deficient urban core wished to colonize and exploit areas providing vital raw materials such as timber, stone and metals (copper and silver), has been countered with less aggressive trade-diaspora⁴⁴ and population displacement⁴⁵ models – there is no doubt that there was a significant component of ideological colonization. That is, ideas about social power and its material correlates were transmitted across time and space borders, to societies that had previously structured themselves along more egalitarian or collective lines.

The impact of Mesopotamian concepts in the south and central Levant could only have been indirect, as no part of the original “Uruk package” made its way that far west. Moreover, the Uruk expansion, which brought – whether by dint of entrepreneurial trade or colonization – a wealth of exotic raw materials from the north to the Mesopotamian heartland, seems to have captured the fifth-millennium north-south trade routes that had connected Anatolia to the Chalcolithic Levant, leaving the fourth-millennium Levant with very few options for northern interaction. Nonetheless, there is ample scope to argue for the diffusion of Mesopotamian urbanizing concepts in the Levant, as we shall see below (Chapter 2). Moreover, the expansion and rapid withdrawal of Uruk-type communities and of the economic activity associated with them certainly impacted regions that, in turn, did interact with the Levant.

Egypt

Before taking the steep route to unification in the final decades of the fourth millennium BCE, the communities of the Nile Valley and Delta may be said to have, in a sense, co-evolved with those of the terminal Chalcolithic and initial Early Bronze Levant.⁴⁶ Agriculture had come late to the Nile Valley, while sedentary village life seems to have begun only after 4000 BCE, in the Naqada I stage. Preserving a strong focus on the care and provision for the dead and developing a uniquely Egyptian symbolic vocabulary and craft tradition, evidence from the delta and from the Levant for late Chalcolithic and initial Early Bronze Age contact – in the form of semi-subterranean dwellings and

ceramic styles found at Ma'adi, near Cairo and Nile Valley shells in the Levant – points to the transmission of West Asian agricultural technology southwards. The adoption of plowing and irrigation in the Nile Valley engendered a rapid increase in population and in productivity in Naqada II, beginning c. 3500 BCE, which in turn formed the basis for emerging temple and state institutions, all revolving around the person and body of divine kings. The accumulation of foreign goods and technologies continued to be pivotal to the power of emerging elites centered in the upper Egyptian towns of Naqada, Hierakonpolis and Abydos, just as in the Mesopotamian alluvium, the acquisition of timber, stone, metals and minerals provided elites with tangible evidence of their superiority. With these, they could build larger houses for themselves and the gods, dazzle the eye with wall decorations and statues encased in gold and encrusted with precious stones, and serve exotic foods and beverages at ritual feasts. Gradually, a unified Egyptian identity was forged, spreading from the upper to the lower Nile Valley and culminating in the emergence of a single dynastic succession. Although rooted in sharply divergent local histories and environments, Egypt appears to have borrowed some of the trappings of early state societies from Uruk itself, by way of Levantine or Persian Gulf intermediaries: cylinder seals, Uruk-inspired mythical scenes and Uruk-style decorated temple façades make a brief appearance in late predynastic Egypt, at the very cusp of political unification. Rather than direct emulation, these borrowings point to a convergence of values between the two distant political systems.

By late Naqada II/early Naqada III, the interaction of Nile Valley elites with the southern Levantine communities had become visible and significant for both sides, as will be presented in detail in Chapter 2. It is therefore important to stress that these interactions were instrumental in the very forging of Egypt itself as a political and cultural entity, highlighting a fundamental difference between the nature of the Levant's dialogue with Egypt and its distant and one-sided relations with Uruk, where the institutions of urbanism and statehood had a longer gestation, growing, as it were, from the bottom up, through a series of incremental advances in productive and administrative technologies.

A BRONZE AGE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE LEVANT

To recapitulate, the Bronze Age is an arbitrary division imposed by European archaeologists on the archaeological record of the Levant, for the purpose of homogenizing terminology and establishing the scientific neutrality of that record, in its role of providing a setting for scripture. The term has, however, been invested with significance by archaeologists of the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean, and is now understood to represent a period of enchained social, economic and technological transformations enacted across the Eurasian

belt, resulting in the establishment of the first cities, states and empires, and of highly productive agricultural landscapes, metal technologies and trade networks. As for the Levant, it is here defined in a narrow geographical sense to encompass a section of the Eastern Mediterranean littoral, the rift valley and the highlands bordering the valley on either side, once known as Canaan and presently occupied by the modern states of Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan and a small sliver of Syria. Historical and political circumstances, especially as they were shaped by early twentieth-century colonial powers, have conspired to create a tell- and Palestine-centric map of excavation, while the motivations and methods of archaeologists, as they evolved across the decades, present us with a very large but uneven dataset, from which one may attempt to forge a coherent narrative description. The narrative places the communities of the Levant within the broad arc of Bronze Age evolution, but at a remove from the neighboring centers of Egypt and Mesopotamia and in a position to accept or resist their influence.

TERMINOLOGICAL NOTE

Historical political and disciplinal boundaries have created a tangle of competing terminologies within and between different parts of the Levant. Rather than add a new set of terms, redoubling confusion, I have chosen to follow extant terminologies. Table 1.2 synchronizes the terms used in this volume with other systems currently in the literature.

Table 1.2 Terms used in this volume synchronized with other systems

This volume	Other terms	ARCANE ^a
Chalcolithic	Late Chalcolithic; Ghassulian	
Early Bronze IA	Initial EB I	ESL 1
Early Bronze IB	Advanced EB I; Proto-Urban	ESL2–3
Early Bronze II		ESL 4
Early Bronze III		ESL 5
Intermediate Bronze Age	Early Bronze IV; Middle Bronze I; Intermediate EB–MB	ESL 6
Middle Bronze I	Middle Bronze IIA	
Middle Bronze II	Middle Bronze IIB–C (or II–III)	
Late Bronze I		
Late Bronze II		
Transitional Bronze–Iron	Late Bronze III	

^a ARCANE is an acronym of the ERC-funded multiyear project, Associated Regional Chronologies of the Ancient Near East. See www.arcane.uni-tuebingen.de/index.html, and Novak and Rutishauser 2013.

NOTES

- 1 Garstang et al. 1922.
- 2 PEQ 1923.
- 3 Vincent 1923.
- 4 Vincent 1914.
- 5 McMurdy 1896: 9.
- 6 Harding 2000.
- 7 Childe 1936; Wengrow 2010a.
- 8 A.G. Sherratt and E.S. Sherratt 1991; A.G. Sherratt 1993; Kristiansen and Larsson 2010; Broodbank 2013.
- 9 Akkermans and Schwartz 2003.
- 10 Na'aman 1994a; 1999; Tammuz 2001, and see below.
- 11 Helms 1998.
- 12 Horden and Purcell 2000: 54–59.
- 13 Wilkinson et al. 2014: 86; Kaniewski et al. 2017.
- 14 Rosen 2007; Finne et al. 2011; Clarke et al. 2015.
- 15 <http://orbis.stanford.edu/>.
- 16 Cited in Emberling 2010.
- 17 Robinson and Smith 1841: xiii.
- 18 Conder and Kitchener 1881–1888; Schumacher 1888; Conder 1889; Cobbing 2005.
- 19 Woolley 1921.
- 20 Petrie 1891; Bliss 1898.
- 21 Kletter and De Groot 2001.
- 22 Greenberg and Keinan 2007; 2009.
- 23 Taha 2010.
- 24 Mazar 1964.
- 25 Dever 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2002.
- 26 Corbett 2011.
- 27 E.g., Falconer and Savage 1995; Chesson and Philip 2003; D'Andrea 2014; Routledge 2014.
- 28 Charaf 2015.
- 29 E.g., Synchronization of Civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean 2000; www.winsersion.org/SCIEM2000/index.html; Reconstructing Ancient Israel, the Exact and Life Sciences Perspective (Finkelstein, Weiner and Boaretto 2015).
- 30 Latour 1987; 1994; 2005; Lemmonier 1993; Olivier 2010.
- 31 Elias 1969; Bourdieu 1977; de Certeau 1984; Mauss 2006 [1935]; Costall and Richards 2013; Hamilakis 2013.
- 32 Kontopoulos 1993; Crumley 1995; Johnson and Earle 2000; Feinman 2013.
- 33 Godelier 1986; 1999; Weiner 1992; Graeber 2014.
- 34 Helms 1988; 1993.

- 35 Betts 2014; Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2014.
- 36 Wengrow 2010a.
- 37 Sherratt 1983.
- 38 Pollock 1999; Carter and Philip 2010.
- 39 Rowan and Golden 2009.
- 40 Nativ 2014.
- 41 Adams 1966; 1981.
- 42 Liverani 2006; Van De Mieroop 2016.
- 43 Algaze 1989; 1993; 2001.
- 44 Frangipane 2001; Schwartz 2001; Stein 2001.
- 45 Butterlin 2003: 97–158.
- 46 Wengrow 2006.

CHAPTER 2

VILLAGES AND THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL POWER IN THE EARLY BRONZE I

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the Early Bronze Age in the Levant – half a millennium before the emergence of cities and states – occurred with little fanfare. In fact, one could claim that the dispersed and slowly evolving village culture that existed in the Levant for the bulk of the fourth millennium scarcely merits the designation of a new age and might better be understood as the tail end of the previous epoch. Nonetheless, the Levantine EB I, originally defined on ceramic grounds, does stand up to scrutiny as a period defined by the deployment and physical character of its settlements, by the relations of production and exchange that it reveals and by the transitions that frame it, placing it apart from what came before and setting the stage for what was to come next. It emerges on the heels of the Ghassulian/Beersheba Chalcolithic, a well-defined entity with powerful expressions of religious and social ideologies (see Chapter 1), which appears to fade away (some would say collapse) in the early centuries of the fourth millennium BCE. It ends with three interrelated phenomena: a swift transition from open to walled communities, rapid changes in the distribution of settlements in the landscape and a marked simplification of the material assemblage. Throughout its 500- to 600-year span, EB I was characterized by an apparently stable village existence, slow demographic growth, and a Mediterranean agricultural economy. Although several important technological innovations can be attributed to the period, EB I society was hardly a buzzing hive of creativity, wealth production or social change. Material culture might therefore show regional differences, but within a consistent technological paradigm. Over time, small EB I communities coalesced into larger villages. Our understanding of the organization and workings of these larger villages is rudimentary; however, the existence of several buildings identified as temples and of large-scale construction efforts reflects an increasing concentration of social power at some localities. Social evolutionists view this as evidence for the gradual emergence of

urbanism in the EB I–II transition, but there are other possibilities, which will be explored in due time.

Early Bronze I is generally subdivided into two main subperiods: EB IA and EB IB (sometimes referred to as “early” and “late” EB I).¹ In the southwest Levant, fine-honed ceramic analysis assisted by Egyptian synchronisms has led to the further subdivision of each subperiod,² but since these subdivisions cannot be applied to the Levant as a whole, they will be noted only in reference to sites and events implicated in them. S.A. Rosen has suggested that the term Middle/Late Timnian (derived from the ancient term for “south”) be applied to pastoralist, largely aceramic sites of the fourth millennium Negev and Arabah, since they were often only minimally integrated with the Mediterranean-zone settlements.³

EB IA, 3800/3600–3350/3300 BCE, is the longer, less familiar subperiod, generally characterized by dispersed village settlement (with a few remarkable exceptions). It corresponds to the Middle Uruk or Late Chalcolithic 3 in Mesopotamia and northern Syria, at the very nascence of urbanism and the initial stages of its expansion, and to the Badarian–Naqada I transition in Egypt, well before the emergence of the state (see Chapter 1). EB IB, 3350/3300–3050 BCE, is characterized by the emergence, alongside the small villages, of the larger, more densely built-up settlements. It is this subperiod that has also received the label “proto-urban” (or pre-urban)⁴ and that has attracted comparisons with Late Uruk Mesopotamia and predynastic Egypt, both of which were in an expansive phase. Indeed, EB IB is marked by a significant incursion of Nile Valley people into the southwest Levantine coast, and by their rapid departure before the onset of EB II. The impact of Late Chalcolithic Uruk and predynastic Egypt on the Levant will be discussed at length below.

According to various climate proxies, the Chalcolithic and most of the Early Bronze I shared a period of relatively abundant precipitation, although there could have been decadal-scale droughts within that time frame that might have affected settlements in marginal zones. More significant is the apparent evidence for a more even distribution of precipitation over the winter months, with fewer flash-flooding events than witnessed in later Bronze Age (and modern) phases. The low-energy alluviation of the late fifth and most of the fourth millennium would have allowed wadi-terrace water-harvesting and farming, in places where later flash-flooding led to deeply incised streambeds that restricted agricultural exploitation.⁵ Within this general framework, a collation of recent studies indicates two significant short-term periods of low precipitation (characterized as “rapid climate change”), one at c. 3800–3600 BCE, the other c. 3300–3200 BCE.⁶ The first event correlates quite remarkably with the beginning of EB IA, and although the Chalcolithic had been in decline from the start of the fourth

millennium, it seems likely that climate change would have precipitated the movement away from marginal zones and back into more traditional dry-farming zones (Figure 2.1). The second event comes at, or slightly after, the transition to EB IB, and might have induced a response that is far less easy to pin down, since Mediterranean agricultural communities were able to respond to declining productivity in various ways (e.g., by adopting new agricultural technologies, by pooling resources or by regulating land use). In this specific case, the beginning of EB IB seems to be characterized by settlement intensification and possibly the creation of collective institutions, as we shall see below.

THE POST-CHALCOLITHIC WORLD: EARLY BRONZE

IA (3800/3600–3300 BCE)

Early Bronze IA has only recently come into its own as a recognizable archaeological entity. The character of the period remains, however, elusive. Clearly, it is post-Chalcolithic in terms of social and economic organization. It is also quite distant from the agglomerated village society that appears to presage the advent of urbanism in the late EB I. Social formations were small and segmented; craft specialization and long-distance contacts were limited. And yet strands of ideological cohesiveness can be traced, as well as receptiveness to interaction with outside world, that was to have significant consequences in the following period. As for its chronology, a growing consensus, based on the most recent radiocarbon determinations, places the beginning of EB I well before the middle of the millennium, between 3800 and 3600 BCE.⁷ The “beginning” of Early Bronze I is, however, a conventional term, as it is becoming increasingly clear that the Chalcolithic–EB IA transition was played out over several centuries. The end of EB IA and the transition to EB IB, placed at 3350/3300 BCE, is based on radiocarbon determinations and on synchronisms between the early EB IB and the late predynastic Naqada IID–IIIA1 phase in Egypt (see Chapter 1 and the section on “The Erani C Phase,” below).

Until the final decades of the twentieth century, the possibility of a gradual transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age and the existence of an extended early stage of the EBA were only faintly recognized. While sporadic elements could be attributed to an EB IA – the Gray Burnished ware of the northern valleys⁸ and ceramic and lithic assemblages of “Site H” and Azor’s “Installation C” on the coastal plain⁹ – the principal remains associated with EB I were those found at the base of the major Palestinian mounds such as Megiddo and Bet Shean, Tell el-Far‘ah (North), Tel Erani



Figure 2.1 Map of sites mentioned in this chapter.

(Sheikh al-‘Areini) or Arad, as well as in the cemeteries of the coastal plain and inland valleys. These often impressive remains and striking mortuary assemblages of the late EB I were considered to represent the entire period, presenting a stark contrast to the preceding Chalcolithic (whether of the Ghassul-Beersheba variety or that of the northern valleys and hills). This gap appeared so insurmountable that many archaeologists posited the complete disappearance of Chalcolithic culture and people, and their comprehensive replacement with a new Bronze Age culture, presumably carried by colonists from the northern Levant who settled in a depopulated south Levantine countryside.¹⁰

A series of excavations and publications of the last two decades of the twentieth century entailed a radical revision of this scenario: excavations at Sidon-Dakerman, Yiftah’el and Tel Te’o in the north,¹¹ Jawa in the east,¹² Azor and Nizzanim on the coast,¹³ Moza in the hills,¹⁴ Taur Ikhbeineh and Halif Terrace in the south,¹⁵ and the publication of Lapp’s excavations in the Bab edh-Dhra’ cemetery in the Dead Sea basin¹⁶ established the existence of a chronologically robust and materially distinct horizon predating the well-established EB I. This horizon featured loosely organized villages with curvilinear single-family dwellings and a material culture assemblage marked by its extreme simplicity. Once established, the reassignment of previously unrecognized contexts to this horizon became possible, e.g., at the base of the Megiddo and Bet Shean sequences¹⁷ and probably at Byblos as well, where the “Eneolithique recent” includes a local Chalcolithic with affinities to the Ghassulian as well as a later phase characterized by curvilinear dwellings.¹⁸

Establishing the existence of an initial stage of EBA village society, distant in time and character from the complex villages of the late EB I, allowed the Chalcolithic–EBA transition to be painted in far less vivid colors than before: rather than the utter collapse of one cultural system, abandonment and the installation of a new system in its place, a nuanced transition could be proposed, in which typical traits of the later period reveal their origins in the earlier one, e.g., the ceramic ledge handle, the lithic Canaanean blade or the mainstay of the Mediterranean economy – the cultivated olive. At the same time, some typical late Chalcolithic traits were found to survive in the EBA: copper tool-making technology, ceramic forms, the mining and knapping of cortical flint and techniques of working basalt.¹⁹ The transition between the two periods could now be characterized as a shift in economic, social and cultural strategies implicated in the movement of communities toward a system that focused on agriculture and the production of staple goods, at the expense of herd management and the exchange and production of precious, finely wrought goods. This strategic shift, first outlined by L. Stager,²⁰ would have been accompanied by the declining ritual-political

importance of complex and durable ceremonial objects, exotic materials and the iconographic representation of ancestors and deities.²¹ The decline of the Chalcolithic and the emergence of new village systems may have been expedited by external factors (such as ecological imbalances or the capture by the Uruk system of raw material sources such as arsenical copper) and by the successful adoption of a Mediterranean agricultural economy founded on cereal crops (wheat and barley) and horticulture (vine and olive). Thus, Chalcolithic culture was not physically wiped out; rather, its core ideological structure was gradually gutted, leaving intact the primary technologies related to agricultural cultivation, staple storage and food preparation and consumption. The material changes doubtless imply changes in social relations, leading to a redefinition of values such as wealth, leadership and corporate identity. Evidence of such shifts – not only at the start of the EBA, but as they are played out throughout the period – can be sought in the plan of settlements and individual houses, in mortuary practices and in routines of agricultural and craft production and exchange.²²

The first stage of the EB I lasted 300 years, at the least. During this long period, change was slow, leaving only minor traces in the material culture assemblages, which in some regions can be assigned an earlier or later date within the period. As of the time of writing, however, we are largely in the dark concerning the nature of these developments.

Landscapes of Settlement: Site Location, Architecture and Economy

EB IA settlement may be characterized as extensive rather than intensive, dispersed rather than agglomerated, with sprawling villages spread thinly along wadi beds, on alluvial fans and on valley floors, and only loosely tethered to specific locations. The character and location of the sites – often discovered in roadcuts or foundation pits, beneath an overburden of sterile soil – has made their identification in surveys difficult and inconsistent. Surveys conducted prior to the 1990s are unlikely to have distinguished the separate phases of EB I, especially in southern and eastern regions, where the highly diagnostic Gray Burnished ware is rare. The main concentrations of surveyed EB IA sites occur along the coastal plain, especially its northern part,²³ in the Hula Valley and Biqat²⁴ and in the Leja and Badia regions of southwest Syria and northeast Jordan.²⁵ Excavated sites, most of which are described below, are spread over the entire Mediterranean zone – the coastal plain, the interior valleys, the central hills and the rift valley – and along the eastern desert margins, including the Arabah valley.

Early Bronze IA villages may not have been settled the year round, and the lack of order evident in their internal layout suggest that houses were periodically abandoned and rebuilt (Figure 2.2). Thus, some villages occupied

extensive tracts of land due to settlement creep over decades and centuries. Elsewhere, clusters of seemingly coeval settlements might represent different occupation episodes of a single population. The typical house in these settlements was simple: an ovoid residential broad room, often with meager dividing walls and evidence for functional subdivision (such as paved storage areas or cooking corners). This basic living unit was occasionally adjoined by additional construction, usually demarcating an irregularly shaped courtyard, pen or compartment. There was no fixed size or orientation to the structures, and large portions of each site appear to have been left open and given over to communal activities of members of adjacent households. Some sites show evidence of collective construction, such as a drainage channel found at Tel Te'o, or a perimeter fence built at Sidon-Dakerman.

Yiftah'el, in the lower Galilee, may be taken as a representative of the "extensive" site type.²⁶ Stratum II at the site, built over the remains of a seventh-millennium Pre-Pottery Neolithic B village with some evidence for a sixth-millennium occupation as well, yielded the remains of about fifteen houses in two separate excavation fields. Some of these houses were built one above the other or overlapped each other in a manner that precluded contemporaneous use. Among the latest and most complete structures in the stratum is Building IIA/1, the "safety-pin" house: an oblong, curvilinear structure with curved dividing walls at each end. Its internal floor area of 67 square meters is adequate for a nuclear family of six, while its internal divisions, with a paved space on one end and a stone pot-stand on the other, are reminiscent of Chalcolithic houses with central broad rooms flanked by walled-off storage and work spaces (though the latter were always rectangular). Finds included storage vessels, for the most part, and a copper axe. Additional houses at Yiftah'el were of similar size and contained similar inventories, but several smaller structures might have served smaller families or were used for storage alone. The pottery of Yiftah'el was largely of local manufacture, in a simple manual technique, with a high proportion of basins, holemouth vessels and pithoi, many with a signature pie-crust or rope decoration and prominent ledge handles (Figure 2.3e-j). Some vessels with a finer execution, including a large group of Gray Burnished vessels and red burnished spin-offs, represent more specialized manufacture, possibly in a regional workshop (see section below on "Ceramic Industries and Other Crafts"). The mammal bone assemblages indicate secondary exploitation of small and large cattle, alongside a relatively high proportion of pigs and hunted species.²⁷

Comparable sites in the northern lowlands include Tel Te'o in the Hula valley and 'Ein Assawir, at the eastern edge of the northern coastal plain.²⁸ Both sites show curvilinear house units of similar size and shape to Yiftah'el. In addition, at Tel Te'o a stone-lined drainage channel that wound between the houses appears to represent a communal effort at water management. The sites were of considerable size, with remains found along a 200- (Assawir)

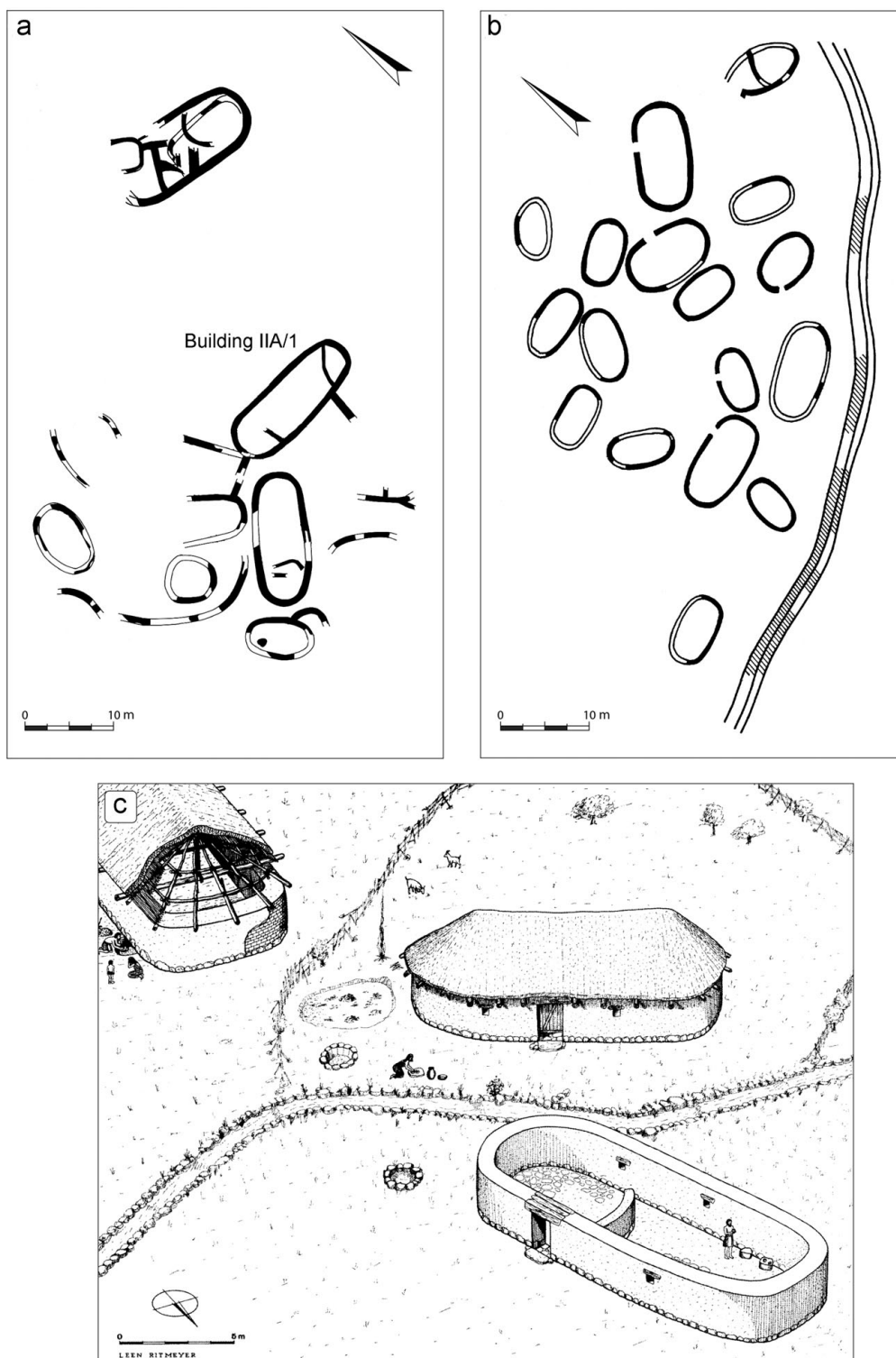


Figure 2.2 Partial site plans of (a) Yiftah'el and (b) Sidon Dakerman, and (c) artist's reconstruction of the curvilinear houses of Tel Te'o. Plans redrawn by I. Ben-Ezra after Braun 1997: figs. 5.2 and 5.3 and Saidah 1979; reconstruction by L. Ritmeyer (Eisenberg, Gopher and Greenberg 2001: fig. 14.4). Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

or 500- (Te'o) meter-long transect, but they were not densely built up. Another large site in the Jordan Valley is Tel Bet Yerah. While the EB IA levels at this major site have been reached only in limited soundings, they provide an extended sequence and ceramic repertoire that allow some insight into the evolution of material culture over that time span.²⁹ As at Yiftah'el, the EB IA ceramic industry seems to be composed of onsite workshops producing basic forms and somewhat more sophisticated regional or specialized red and gray burnished wares. Significantly, the excavators claim to have identified a late EB IA ceramic horizon populated by large bowls with a flaky, burnished red-brown to black slip and ridged holemouth jars. Since these types are well represented at Tel Te'o and the Hula Valley survey sites, as well as at long-lived sites like Yiftah'el, there might be an opening to identify an early-late dynamic in EB IA settlement patterns that has so far eluded us.

The most extensively excavated site (or site cluster) in the southern part of the southern Levant is that excavated in the Afridar neighborhood of Ashqelon.³⁰ Located on a kurkar ridge, the site consists of dispersed groups of residential structures and a large industrial area with evidence of metal-working. Like the northern sites, the houses are curvilinear to subrectangular, some of them having adjunct rooms or pens. Ceramic, ground-stone and radiocarbon evidence all point to an almost uninterrupted sequence from the late Chalcolithic (found only in pits) to the EB IA. Lithics and stone processors, as well as faunal remains, point to an agricultural economy; craft activities are indicated by spindle whorls, pottery tournettes and crucibles for copper processing. The presence of equids among the fauna is consistent with the evidence for interregional trade, expressed in the presence of copper, basalt artifacts, Canaanite flint blades and a carbonized fragment of cedar wood.

Several sites located outside the coastal plain and inland valley regions display a somewhat more condensed configuration of houses as well as rudimentary defensive construction. The site of Sidon-Dakerman, in a rather isolated location on the narrow Lebanese coastal strip, consists of a dense but haphazard cluster of ovoid houses, very similar in outline to those of Yiftah'el (see Figure 2.2).³¹ Remains of a stone fence partly encircled the site. The hilltop site of Jebel el-Mutawwaq, overlooking Wadi Zerqa, on the semi-arid eastern edge of the Ajlun hills in central Transjordan, consists of a large concentration of ovoid to circular houses and auxiliary structures (numbering in the hundreds), also surrounded by a stone fence.³² Adjacent to the site, which appears to have been occupied during both EB IA and EB IB, is a large megalithic cemetery. Further to the east, in the Black Desert south of Damascus, lies the site of Jawa, in which house-clusters of irregular plan abut a sturdy stone barrier.³³ Here, and in moister basaltic regions to the west, surveys have revealed evidence of early water-management systems, including check dams, canals and reservoirs, that could have supported pastoral communities and small-scale cultivation in zones that were either semi-arid or had only pockets

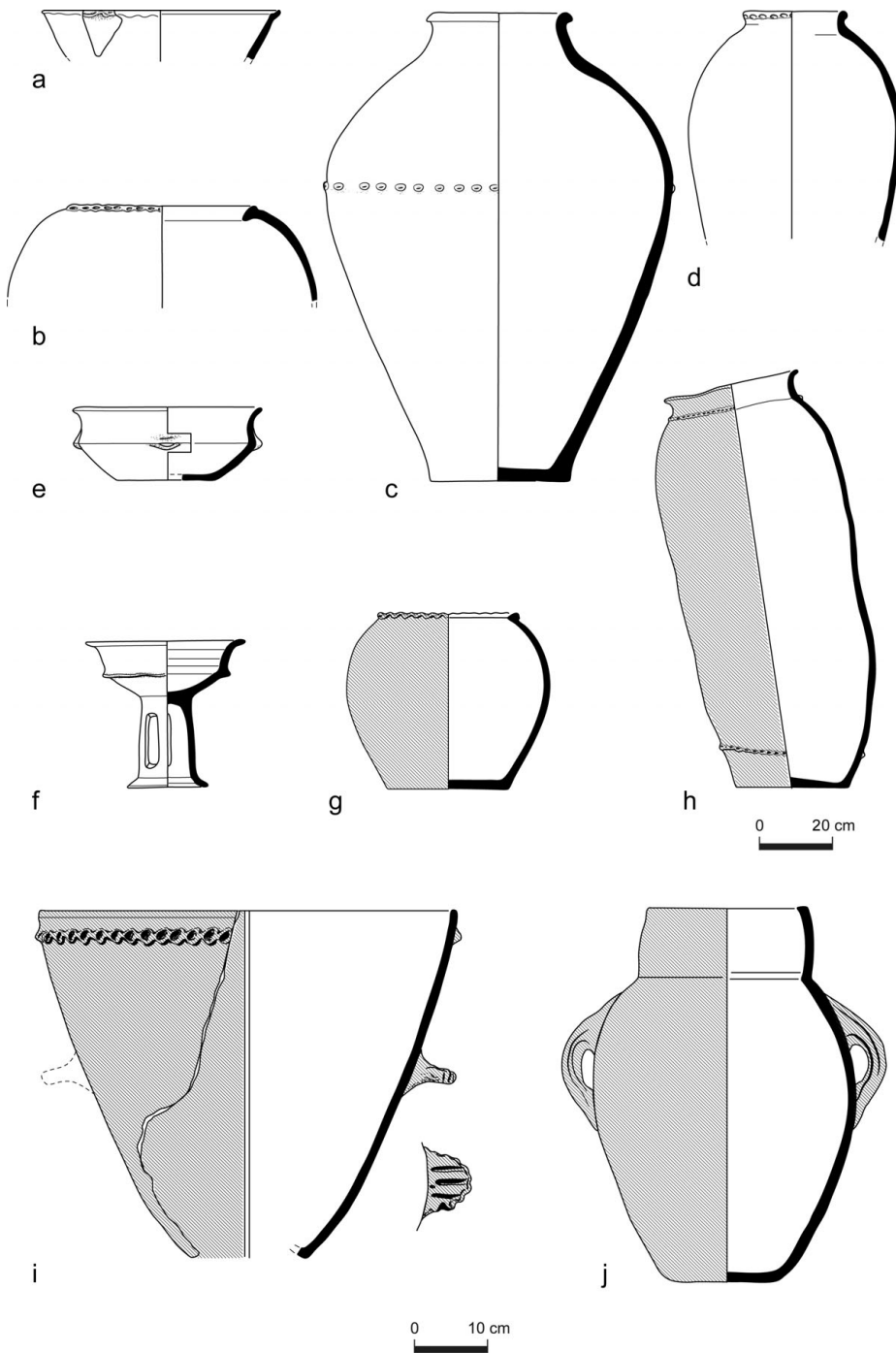


Figure 2.3 EB IA pottery: (a–d) southern types, (e–j) northern types. Redrawn by N. Earon after Khalaily 2004: figs. 6–8, Braun 1997: figs. 9.3–9.24.

of arable land.³⁴ Similar technologies would have been available and could have been used to irrigate fields in the Mediterranean zones as well. Nicolle and Braemer report the discovery of fourteen early EB I sites in the basaltic Leja district of southwest Syria, including the mega-site of Sharaya with an estimated 500–800 structures, most of which were concentrated within a walled enclosure. They propose that the larger sites served as seasonal aggregation sites for the same pastoralist populations who used the small sites, which typically consist of enclosures surrounded by peripheral rooms. Their EB IA date is, however, based almost solely on structural comparisons with Dakerman and Mutawwaq.

Further illustration of successful arid-zone adaptation is provided by the EB IA Arabah Valley site of Wadi Fidan 4. This was primarily a farming community, occupying a cluster of rectangular and subrectangular structures, some of whose members also specialized in mining and processing of copper and small-scale production of tools.³⁵

The location of most Early Bronze IA villages on or very near alluvial soils in valleys and wadi beds, as well as their typical domestic inventory composed principally of vessels and artifacts associated with household agricultural production, cereal processing, storage and consumption, indicate that their inhabitants practiced a diversified, risk-avoiding Mediterranean agricultural economy. The EB IA economy relied on cereal farming in the valleys and wadi flood-terraces, horticulture (primarily of olive and vines) on hill slopes or near springs, and small-scale animal husbandry. In a sparsely populated landscape, where villages could afford to be built on arable soils, production was constrained not by the availability of land but by that of labor. Starting in the EB IA, the measure of social power would have been the ability to recruit labor, in the first instance for agricultural production, and subsequently for other collective aims. A corollary may well have been the entrenchment of patriarchy in Levantine societies, in advance of the incorporation of villages as “house societies.”³⁶

The EB IA animal economy relied primarily on sheep/goat, both for meat and for secondary products – wool and milk. Studies on the faunal assemblages from Yiftah’el, Azor, Ashqelon-Afridar and Bet Yerah show that cattle husbandry was more important for its secondary products – milk and traction – than for its meat.³⁷ Pigs, probably free-roaming in the villages, were abundant (15–46 percent of the total recorded assemblage) and an important auxiliary source of meat. The presence of donkeys, raised to maturity, might be seen as an index of the use of animals for transport, as well as for traction (plowing and threshing). There was evidence of hunting, as well as for the consumption of fish and mollusks. The data suggest that livestock was locally managed at each site.

Direct evidence for the plant economy is extremely meager, but it does show that olive, and probably grapes as well, were an important part of the agricultural package in the Mediterranean regions. While plowing is only

indirectly attested by the presence of adult equids and cattle, it is a reasonable inference, considering the location of villages on or near heavy alluvial soils at sites like Yiftah'el or Bet Yerah. Arid-zone sites show considerable cereal cultivation, probably in winter plots to which wadi floodwaters could be diverted. Additional arid-zone cultivars included flax and grapes.³⁸

Non-agricultural pursuits do not seem to have played an important role in EB IA communities of the Levantine heartland. Aside from Ashqelon-Afridar (see above), specialized crafts were practiced at sites located near the relevant resources. This would have included copper tool production in the Arabah Valley, Canaanite blade and tabular-scraper production at quarry sites, basalt vessel production in areas such as the Hauran and the Karak region in Transjordan, and Gray Burnished ware by itinerant potters in the northern valleys. Presumably, some of these products circulated in the Levant through interregional trade, yet their numbers are too small to suggest anything other than gift and limited commodity exchange occasioned by seasonal gatherings and ceremonial encounters. Likewise, evidence of long-distance contacts, for example, with Egypt, is sparse, and the few examples of imported pottery (e.g., Naqada II pottery at Taur Ikhbeineh) can be accounted for by sporadic, mutual contacts along the Sinai coast, of the type attested in the Chalcolithic period, if not earlier.³⁹

Ceramic Industries and Other Crafts

Early Bronze IA ceramic industries were typically household or village workshop industries, with some evidence for regional specialization and trade. Although handmade and hand-finished vessels were the norm in most industries, the first certain appearance of the basalt tournette⁴⁰ testifies to a willingness to invest time and effort in the creation of symmetrical, well-finished vessels, which can be understood as either a residue of Chalcolithic practice or the harbinger of later, EB IB, specialization. Due to the diverse contexts of production, EB IA ceramics from across the region might betray a family resemblance, but show a great deal of variation in technique, morphological details, decoration and general quality. Broadly speaking, two main ceramic provinces can be delineated, one in the northern coastal region and inland valleys and the other in the southern coastal plain. Less widely distributed traditions are associated with Bab edh-Dhra' and cemeteries of the southeast Dead Sea plain, and with sites in the az-Zarqa basin east of the Jordan River.

In the southern assemblages, especially those of the southern coastal plain and lowlands (Figure 2.3a–d), some morphological continuity can be observed with the Chalcolithic (alongside abrupt changes in raw material and in the organization of production, which had been far more specialized).⁴¹ This continuity is expressed in details, such as the continued existence of straight-walled (V-shaped) bowls and jars with conical necks and the use of

indented “pie-crust” decoration on jar and krater rims or handles. Significant differences include the disappearance of iconic Chalcolithic forms such as the cornet and churn, the universal use of ledge handles (at the expense of pierced lug handles) and the increasing use of red slip, which was sometimes burnished. In the northern valley assemblages too (Figure 2.3e–j), a degree of continuity with the northern Chalcolithic is evident: this is expressed in the frequency of plastic decoration (rope and incised decoration) in all the northern village industries, as well as in the painted EB IA style of Tel Bet Yerah.⁴² Red burnished slips are far more common than in the south, and kraters and tall, often deformed pithoi typically bear a band of rope decoration around the neck (on jars) or at the rim (on kraters). Holemouth jars have ridged rims, often decorated with incisions. Most characteristic of all in the northern valley assemblage is a well-defined group of vessels fired to varying shades of gray and bearing a glossy burnish. This group, termed Gray Burnished ware (GBW), is comprised solely of large bowls and fenestrated chalices (Figure 2.3e, f).⁴³ The bowls are decorated with a row of tongue-shaped protrusions or nubs, usually placed along a distinct carination that gives them a sinuous profile (when the nubs are closely spaced they form a prominent wavy band). The GBW vessels are reminiscent in size, color and shape of the basalt vessels of the Chalcolithic and, like them, may well have been prestige objects, used to present food or drink in a collective, ceremonial setting. But they differ significantly from the basalt vessels in their molded contours, sinuous applied bands or tongue-like knobs, and in their high, “oily” burnish, which provide a sensorial impression quite distinct from that of Chalcolithic ceramic or stone containers, angular and rough to the touch.

The high technical quality of GBW, consistent from one site to another, suggests that it was produced by highly skilled craftspersons who may have traveled from one community to another, or who formed a closed guild (petrography indicates that vessels were usually made of locally available materials at each site).⁴⁴ High burnish and a smoky surface had long been part of the central and northern Levantine potter’s toolkit, maintained throughout the sixth and fifth millennia. Their fourth-millennium emergence in the northern valleys of the southern Levant could point to a north Levantine orientation of these specialists.

The Bab edh-Dhra’ ceramic assemblage, as a mortuary assemblage, can represent only a particular facet of the regional industry of the southeastern Dead Sea plain, which is otherwise attested in pottery looted from the large regional cemeteries at Safi and Fifa. It includes a large group of red-slipped hemispheric bowls with a beaded decoration beneath the rim and similarly decorated amphoriskoi and small jars. Loop handles and plain ledge handles are found on both jars and bowls.⁴⁵ The assemblages of the Wadi az-Zarqa basin, extending eastward from Tell Um Hammad in the Jordan Valley, also feature

bands of incised decoration, but are notable for their pushed-up lug handles, applied to holemouth and necked jars.⁴⁶

As noted earlier, typo-chronological subdivisions within the 300–500 years of the EB IA have been attempted for the southern plains and for the northern valleys, but they have yet to be expanded beyond local stratigraphic sequences.⁴⁷

The chipped stone industry underwent a significant contraction in the Chalcolithic–EBA transition. Long-standing traditions of lithic production, such as the manufacture of bifacials – axes, adzes and chisels – went by the wayside, perhaps in the wake of the expanded use of copper tools. Surviving craft practices diverged, one path being that of ad hoc, expedient production of simple tools at the local level, and the other, specialized production of two principal products, Canaanite blades and tabular (or fan) scrapers (Figure 2.4a, b).⁴⁸ Canaanite blades – long trapezoidal blades struck off prepared cores, subsequently snapped into smaller segments and retouched to serve as sickle segments or threshing-board inserts – were produced at sites with suitable flint bulbs, mainly in the northern and central Levant. Tabular scrapers, large retouched flakes that usually retain part of the cortex on one side, were produced for the most part in the southern and eastern deserts, where tabular flint is readily accessible. They most likely would have been used for butchering and wool-shearing. Whether the blade and scraper production sites were permanently occupied by specialists or were operated by seasonal expeditions from the permanent villages, the widespread distribution of their products testifies to the survival of interregional trade in the EB IA and, with it, the possibility of information transfer in the mid-fourth millennium Levant.

A similar development can be observed regarding ground stone vessels, with the Chalcolithic prestige industry being largely replaced with limited production of flared-rim mortars (Figure 2.4d).⁴⁹ A notable development is the regular production of small, symmetrical basalt flywheels, introduced in the Chalcolithic, but standardized in the EB I (Figure 2.4c). These are generally defined as spindle-whorls, although they could have served as flywheels for any tool requiring steady rotary motion, such as a pump drill. The first basalt ceramic *toumettes* were fashioned at this time as well (Figure 2.4e).⁵⁰ The investment of time and labor in the production of sturdy polished wheels intended to produce kinetic energy⁵¹ is emblematic of the utilitarian, engendered tendencies of work-allotment in the EB IA – and in the EBA as a whole. Assuming the procurement of basalt and the grinding and polishing of flywheels and *toumettes* to be masculine activities, the investment of such labor in implements usually associated with domestic work in a village setting (spinning and pot-making) testifies to the attempt to regulate and perhaps physically constrain female work in the context of the reorganization of human labor and productive technologies in the run-up to urbanization.⁵²

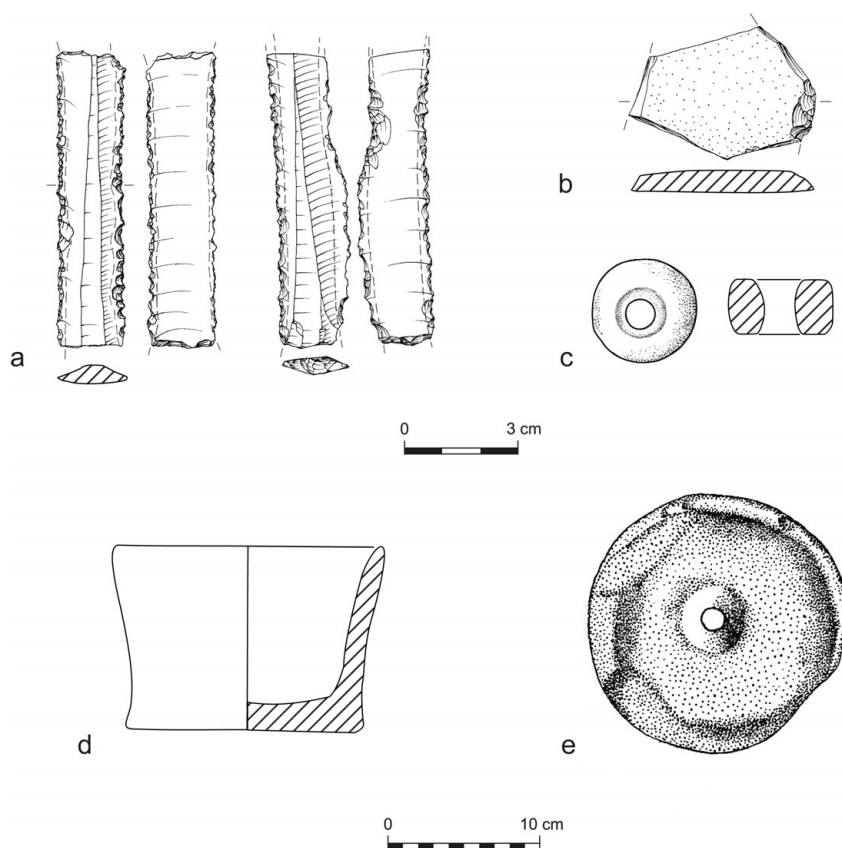


Figure 2.4 EB IA flint and stone artifacts: (a) Canaanite blades, (b) tabular scraper, (c) basalt whorl, (d) bowl and (e) potter's wheel. Redrawn by N. Earon after Khalaily 2004: figs. 19, 22, 23 and Dothan 1959: fig. 8.

The same utilitarian tendency evident in the chipped stone and ground stone industries can be observed in the copper tool assemblage. Although the number of tools found is quite small, a number of EB IA sites – especially in the vicinity of Ashqelon-Afridar – have yielded traces of metal-working.⁵³ The technology exhibited at these sites – casting, hot and cold forging, and annealing – testifies to a robust metalworking tradition, focused on the production of basic tools. Most were no doubt melted down and recycled when they went out of use, and hence do not turn up in tombs or middens, but only in the occasional unreclaimed cache (differing in this respect from the common association of metals with subterranean ceremonial or mortuary contexts in the Chalcolithic period). Copper tools include simple axes and adzes, knives and awls. While tool production took place at village sites, the ore sources remained unchanged: most of the copper was mined either in the northern Arabah Valley, in and around Wadi Feinan, or in its south, near Timna. In the latter region, the German–Jordanian excavations at Hujeyrat

el-Ghuzlan and Tell el-Magass, near Aqabah, have revealed intensive metal-working activity in well-preserved, densely built up villages dated to 3900–3500 BCE, i.e., precisely spanning the Chalcolithic–EB IA transition. The absence of typical Levantine assemblages at these sites suggests that they may have been established by non-Levantine people who exploited their location near the mines and the Gulf of Aqaba to initiate trade with Egypt, via the Sinai Peninsula, or with more distant regions, by way of the Red Sea.⁵⁴

Tombs and Cemeteries

An early glimpse into the evolution of EBA mortuary practices is afforded by the remarkably well-preserved remains in the Wadi Makukh cave in the Judean desert, where a primary burial and a rich trove of organic materials dating to about 3800 BCE was discovered in 1993.⁵⁵ We may imagine the funeral procession making its way along the wadi bed, northwest of the Dead Sea. In our imagined procession, four men carry the pallet, upon which lies the body of an elderly man of some distinction, wrapped in a red-stained shroud, covered by a tasseled linen shawl and placed on a woven mat. Following them, mourners carry the personal effects of the deceased: a hunter's bow and arrows, ritually "killed"; a willow staff; his sandals; a wooden bowl; a sieve; and the only non-perishable item – a fine flint blade. Had any of them been awarded the benefit of archaeological hindsight, they might have remarked on the difference between this procession and those that had taken place nearby, some centuries before. In those ceremonies, the dead – or, rather, their collected bones – would have been deposited with those of their ancestors, provided for with ceramic and stone receptacles and honored by the interment of precious objects made of exotic metals or minerals.⁵⁶ Here, in a post-Chalcolithic world, prestige was indicated by the entourage, the personal effects and by the sheer transformative labor needed to produce the flax and the 15 square meters of linen cloth for the shroud. Annette Weiner, who has written extensively on the significance of cloth in sacral and mortuary contexts, dwells on the relation between cloth and death, noting how cloth differs from hard and durable materials in the work of commemoration:

It is not accidental that the very physicality of cloth, its woven-ness, and its potential for fraying and unraveling denote the vulnerability in acts of connectedness and tying, in human and cultural reproduction, and in decay and death. Contrastingly, hard possessions such as jade, precious metal, or bones are much more durable than cloth, making them better physical objects for symbolizing permanence and historical accountings. Cloth, unlike hard materials, is able to represent the more realistic paradox of how permanence in social, political, and ancestral relationships is sought after despite the precariousness of these relationships always subject to loss, decay, and death.⁵⁷

One of the seemingly dramatic changes at the Chalcolithic–EBA transition was in the way the dead were commemorated in the landscape, above ground or below the surface, in carved or natural tomb–caves: the Chalcolithic period is usually associated with rich and complex burial paraphernalia (e.g., the well-known decorated ossuaries), next to which the EB IA appears to be frugal and nondescript. A second look reveals the change to be less abrupt. The key here is the realization that burial rituals were primarily aimed at ensuring the successful transition of the soul, after the death of the body, to its final resting place, and that such rituals comprised a series of representations – of the community, of the next of kin, of the deceased and of the circumstances of death. In other words, cemeteries are a part of society and of the negotiation of social relationships, and the practices associated with burial may therefore exhibit a considerable degree of variation, in accordance with changing social and personal circumstances. In his study of Chalcolithic burial grounds, Nativ has demonstrated how Chalcolithic mortuary practice fell into several different classes, in terms of the structure and organizing principles of the cemetery, and that burial paraphernalia varied from the exotic and spectacular to the spare and unadorned, but that all were founded on the principle of secondary burial (primary burials are occasionally found within settlements or in cultic settings).⁵⁸ From such a perspective, burial furniture and gifts take on a secondary role, while the social relations expressed in Chalcolithic burial are diverse: some appear to prioritize status, others prioritize lineage continuity, while still others prioritize shared communal values.

Early Bronze IA cemeteries, of which only a few have been excavated, testify to a considerable degree of continuity with some Chalcolithic concepts and the jettisoning of others – particularly those that are concerned with durable representations of ancestors in the form of sculpture, painting or bone-hard objects of metal and stone. In an isolated tomb cave at Gadot, in the Hula Valley, several secondary burials were accompanied by a modest ceramic assemblage and a few beads. The ceramics included unusual libation vessels and receptacles that might have been custom-made for the burial ritual.⁵⁹ A huge EB IA cemetery has been explored and partly excavated at Bab edh-Dhra', on a plateau just east of the Dead Sea. In a formal burying ground numbering thousands of carved chambers, which must have served the population of several communities in the region, Paul Lapp, Walter Rast and R.T. Schaub excavated a series of family tombs.⁶⁰ Each such tomb typically consisted of a single vertical shaft, excavated from the surface to a depth of several meters, from which four or five subterranean chambers branched out (Figure 2.5). In the center of each chamber lay the post-cranial remains of a number of individuals – adults and children – in discrete bone piles placed on mats, with the skulls placed around them. Burial gifts – ceramic, wood and basalt vessels, as well as the occasional crudely fashioned anthropomorphic figurine, stone mace head, or item of personal adornment (including a number

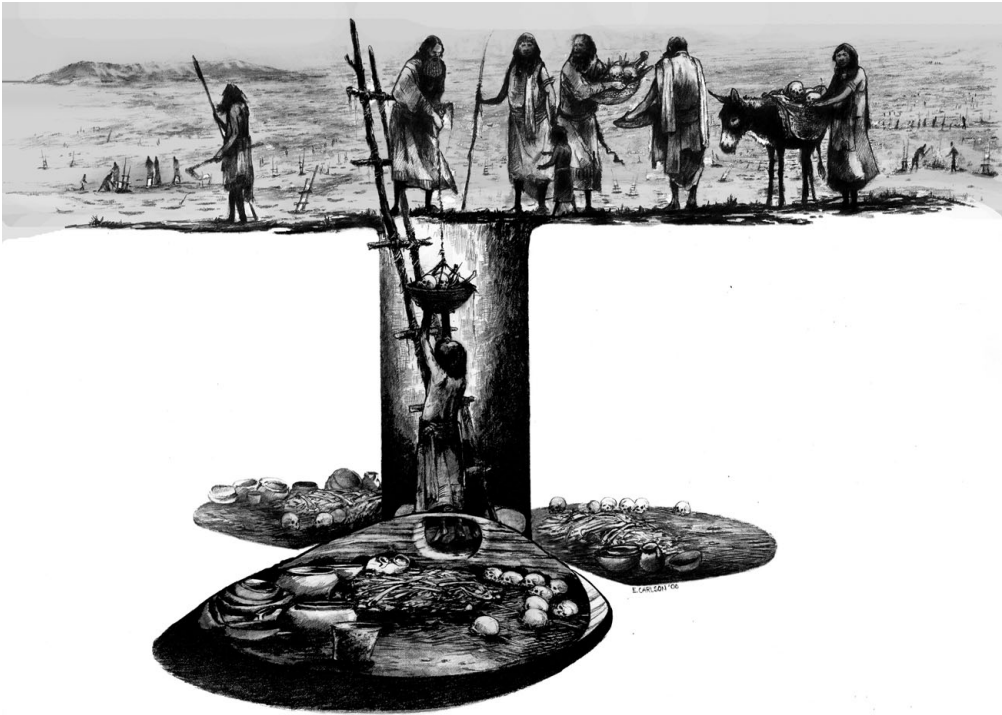


Figure 2.5 Reconstruction of shaft-tomb burial at EB IA Bab edh-Dhra'. Drawing by E. Carlson. Courtesy of M. Chesson.

of exotic beads) – were placed around the perimeter of the chamber. Meredith Chesson has written extensively of the structured commemoration exhibited in the EB IA cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra', which she sees as the first evidence for appropriation of the landscape by previously mobile groups.⁶¹ She notes an absence of gender- or age-related patterning: all the members of the extended family in each tomb group became part of the ancestral community. Among the grave offerings, ceramic vessels were ubiquitous, stone vessels far less so, and figurines and mace heads very rare indeed. And although the differential distribution of material goods might express differences in wealth or ability to obtain exotic materials, it seems that the emphasis on perishables – whether wooden bowls and staves, mats and cloth, or the real or imaginary contents of the ceramics – points to a similar set of values as that exhibited in the Wadi Makukh cave mentioned at the start of this chapter, emphasizing nature's bounty and human productivity as well as unravelling and decay.

South of Bab edh-Dhra', extensive looting has occurred in at least two more enormous EB IA cemeteries, at Fifa and es-Safi. Many of these looted tombs were stone-lined cist graves, and thus represent an otherwise unknown practice with Chalcolithic antecedents. As in the case of Bab edh-Dhra' we must assume that the burial ground served a dispersed population.⁶²

While children have been identified in the Bab edh-Dhra' tombs, infants were not usually accorded full status as social personas; rather, the practice of intramural subfloor burial, usually in pots, has been sporadically recorded. For example, several infant burials were reported from late EB IA contexts at Tel Bet Yerah: a sequence of burials in rather archaic splayed bow-rim jars from the "deep cut" in Area SA, each capped with crackled ware bowls/lids, and a holemouth jar from Area GB, capped with a bowl and sealed with lime plaster.⁶³

At Sidon-Dakerman, and especially at Byblos, burial grounds containing primary adult pithos inhumations, often richly furnished, have been described. The Byblos cemetery includes upward of 2,000 inhumations, located in proximity to the houses (a minority of the inhumations were found beneath houses, but they may well precede them).⁶⁴ Adults were buried in pithoi that were placed horizontally in pits, whereas infants were buried in small upright pots. Burial gifts included primarily ceramics and personal ornaments. The dating of the cemetery is uncertain, but most likely covers the end of the Chalcolithic, the EB IA and part of EB IB. The custom of primary burial, as well as the style of the pithoi themselves and of their contents, is clearly distinct from those of any neighboring regions, underlining the independent evolution of the small, isolated entities of the central Levantine coast in the period preceding their late fourth/early third millennium incorporation in international sea trade routes.⁶⁵

The End of EB IA

Life in a sparsely populated village society, like that of the EB IA Levant, was laden with risk. In the absence of unifying institutions and networks of mutual support, village households had to be self-reliant and flexible, ready to relocate if times were hard – hence, the impermanence that characterizes EB IA village architecture. Seasonal gatherings of scattered households or groups, vital for the exchange of goods and marriage partners, may be responsible for some of the large aggregations of structures that characterize EB IA, as well as the broad distribution of Gray Burnished feasting paraphernalia. A chronic shortage of labor might have spurred several important innovations, such as the perfection of the "traction complex" comprised of plow, sledge and ox/donkey. Donkeys could also help maintain vital internal transport routes for flint, stone and metals (whether as raw material or as finished products). But the impact of these innovations was slow to appear in the three to five centuries of EB IA existence. Limited population growth and the virtual absence of interaction with the rapidly evolving Late Chalcolithic societies of Syro-Mesopotamia might explain the absence of evidence for social change during EB IA and the fact that few villages maintained their existence into EB IB. Nonetheless, the founding principles of this agricultural society eventually served as the basis for

large-scale economic and social development in the following periods, as the control of labor and staple products was the key to the emergence of economies and societies of scale.

COMPLEX MEDITERRANEAN VILLAGES (EARLY BRONZE IB),
3300–3050 BCE

In Chapter 1 it was noted that the Uruk “world system” effectively marginalized the Levantine seaboard, in relation to other parts of the Near East. Eventually, the rift was healed, so that by the final third of the fourth millennium, parallel, mutually reinforcing processes were set into motion that allowed the Levant to emerge from its isolation and encouraged change in its social structure. First, contact was established between Uruk Mesopotamia and pre-dynastic Egypt. This contact was enlisted by agents of political and social change within Egyptian society to promote the swift and dazzling emergence of elite culture. Egyptian elites forged an ideology of rulership at home and began to cultivate trade with Egypt’s near and distant neighbors. Concurrently, selected facets of Mesopotamian urban culture began to find their way into local Levantine inventories. For themselves, Levantine village societies began to exhibit spatial durability and physical and architectural expansion.

The last quarter of the fourth millennium BCE has begun to emerge as the “golden age” of Levantine (or, more specifically, south Levantine) village society. Hundreds of sites identified through survey, accompanied by scores of large and small cemeteries, reveal a density of settlement unparalleled in earlier periods and unmatched for millennia to come. Excavations of large and small villages show permanent, long-term residences of extended families, a developed material culture that testifies to multiple specializations; developed cultivation of cereals, olives and vines; and interregional trade in raw materials and prestige objects. Prosperous households testify to the accumulation of wealth by leading families or possibly of local rulers, and at one site – Tel Megiddo – a temple precinct has been discovered that shows the extraordinary growth of planning and construction capabilities at this site, which no doubt served as a regional ceremonial center.

Despite the wealth of data compiled and the confidence with which one may delineate the contours of its settlement, culture and economy, there is still considerable uncertainty about chronological subdivisions within EB IB and the character of the changes that characterize both its beginning and its end. It is now clear that two phases, at least, may be discerned. In the earlier phase, beginning at about 3300 BCE (we lack a precise date for the transition, and it may easily be moved earlier or later by fifty years), the Levant – and especially its southernmost region – sees the establishment of aggregated, densely built-up villages, some showing the rudiments of social stratification, wealth accumulation and collective construction. In the later phase, from

about 3150 BCE onward, many villages attain their greatest extent, with some – particularly in the Jordan and Jezreel Valleys – showing signs of centralization. However, the expansion is also marked by signs of stress that lead to dramatic changes at the transition to EB II. The evidence for precise date of this latter transition is contradictory: in some places it can be assigned to a time no later than the mid-thirty-first century, while at others it falls later, within the thirtieth century BCE. Thus, the end of the EB I should probably not be strongly marked, but rather characterized as a fuzzy or fractured horizon, within which change at one site could predate, by some decades, a similar change at another.

The Erani C Phase

The clearest evidence for the existence of a distinct early phase within EB IB comes from the southern inland and coastal plain. In this region, several planned and unplanned (salvage) excavations conducted since the 1980s have revealed a shared ceramic assemblage that has come to be known as the “Erani C” horizon, after the type site of Tel Erani (also known by the names Sheikh Ahmed al-‘Areini or Tel Gat), where it was first defined. Stratum C of the Kempinski and Gilead excavations at Erani (which were an attempt to establish a correct sequence in correlation with the poorly published Yeivin excavations of the 1950s–1960s) is represented by parts of two impressive compounds, each containing multiple rooms, pillared halls and courtyards, separated by a street (Figure 2.6). In another part of the site a broad mudbrick fortification has been attributed to the same phase.⁶⁶ These remains have been interpreted by Yekutieli as an incipient form of urbanization, characterized by conspicuous private construction and collectively planned and executed fortification.

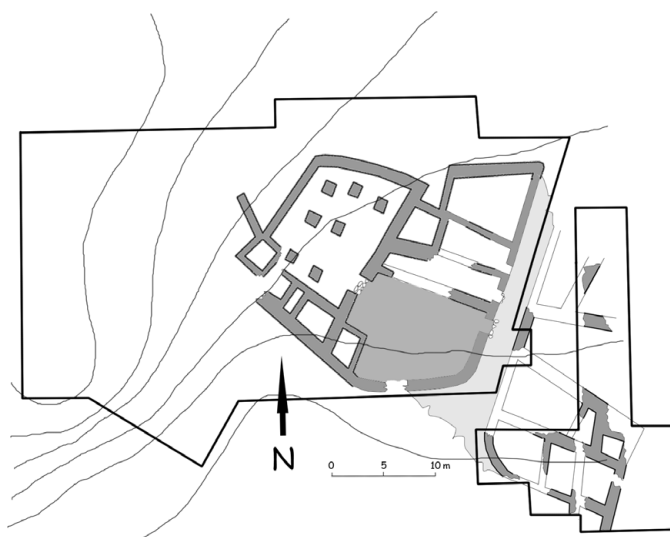


Figure 2.6 Plan of the “Stratum C1” buildings at Tel Erani. Courtesy of Y. Yekutieli.

The ceramic characteristics of the Erani C horizon, which are, oddly enough, better represented at sites quite distant from the type-site than at the type-site itself, belong to two industries, one confined to Tel Erani and its immediate environs, and one that is shared among a group of sites in southwest Canaan and which was exported beyond its borders. It is the latter industry, or style, which is of greater interest. Its salient features include the use of broad red “pajama” stripes on jars and bowls, rows of small incisions along the base of jar necks and on their handles, short bands of incised rope-decoration attached to holemouth jars with vertically cut rims, notched ledge handles on large jars, and a peculiar asymmetrical amphoriskos or churn, bearing a characteristically incised crossed circle appliqué on one end. The largest corpus of complete vessels of the Erani C type comes from Egyptian late predynastic tombs in Abydos (Tomb U-j, discussed further below) and Minshat Abu Omar, and the ware also figures prominently in ceramics collected in the North Sinai Survey.⁶⁷ It is thus a useful tool for synchronization between the predynastic and Levantine sequences.

Additional sites that are contemporaneous with Erani Stratum C include the coastal site of Ashqelon-Barnea (a short distance north of the Afridar sites) and Pétura, some distance inland.⁶⁸ Stratum II at Ashqelon-Barnea comprises a series of walled compounds and industrial complexes with evidence for metal-working. Similar compounds – rectilinear with rounded corners – have been excavated at Pétura. Two significant sites of the same horizon were excavated near Bet Shemesh: the Hartuv site – a well-built multiroomed rectilinear complex that has been interpreted as a shrine – and the Eshta’ol Junction site, where part of a large, well-ordered village, with domestic compounds and streets, was revealed during salvage work.⁶⁹ Erani C phases have also been identified at Jericho, Tel Halif Terrace and ‘En Besor.⁷⁰ The emerging picture is one of rapid growth and systemization of village settlement in the southwest Levant, with signs of incipient stratification and institutionalization. As will be shown below, this phase can be placed – thanks to Egyptian correlations – within the thirty-third to thirty-second centuries BCE.

The existence of a parallel phase in other parts of the Levant has not been substantiated, as the ceramic sequences do not match those of the south. There are several sites with an extended EB I sequence, but no ceramic markers have been established for an early EB IB phase corresponding to Erani C. At some sites, a stratified architectural sequence within EB IB has been observed, from curvilinear houses with two parallel long walls and rounded ends, to rectilinear broad rooms with rounded external corners. If the ovoid structures at sites such as ‘En Shadud and Qiryat Ata are to be equated chronologically with the Erani C phase, it might be posited that the north lagged behind the south, in terms of village complexity.⁷¹ The same would hold true of the eastern Jordan Valley and central Levant, where no discrete early EB IB phase can be discerned.

Complex Villages of the Levant

By the final centuries of the fourth millennium BCE, village settlement in the Levant had reached its apex, in both numbers and size. In certain regions, particularly in the Jordan Valley, the Bet Shean and Jezreel Valleys, the western Galilee and along the coastal plain, archaeological surveys indicate a remarkable increase in settlement, particularly alongside streambeds, which were often exploited along their entire length. For example, in a limited area between the Bet Shean Valley to the east and the eastern Jezreel Valley in the west, 105 EB I sites, the majority founded in EB IB, were counted in an area of about 1000 square kilometers (about half of which is a virtually uninhabitable basalt plateau), three times the number recorded for the EB II.⁷² Other regions show large numbers of EB I sites as well. In their review of EBA settlement patterns in Jordan, Savage, Falconer and Harrison award the largest number of settlement clusters to EB I, and the West Bank archaeological database ascribes 260 sites to this phase.⁷³ A considerable number of the EB IB villages reached sizes of more than 20 hectares, including those lying at the base of Tel Bet Yerah, Tel Kabri, Tell Assawir, Megiddo, Tell esh-Shuna and Tell Um Hammad. At many other sites, extensive EB I village occupations form a distinct “lower city” or terrace underlying the later, smaller mounds. When excavated, the large villages tend to be densely built-up, with occasional evidence for site-wide organization. A number of town walls have been attributed to EB I, though they are by no means universal.

Early Bronze IB settlements take on a plethora of forms (Figure 2.7). At Horbat ‘Illin Tahtit, in the Judean foothills, salvage excavations have revealed a

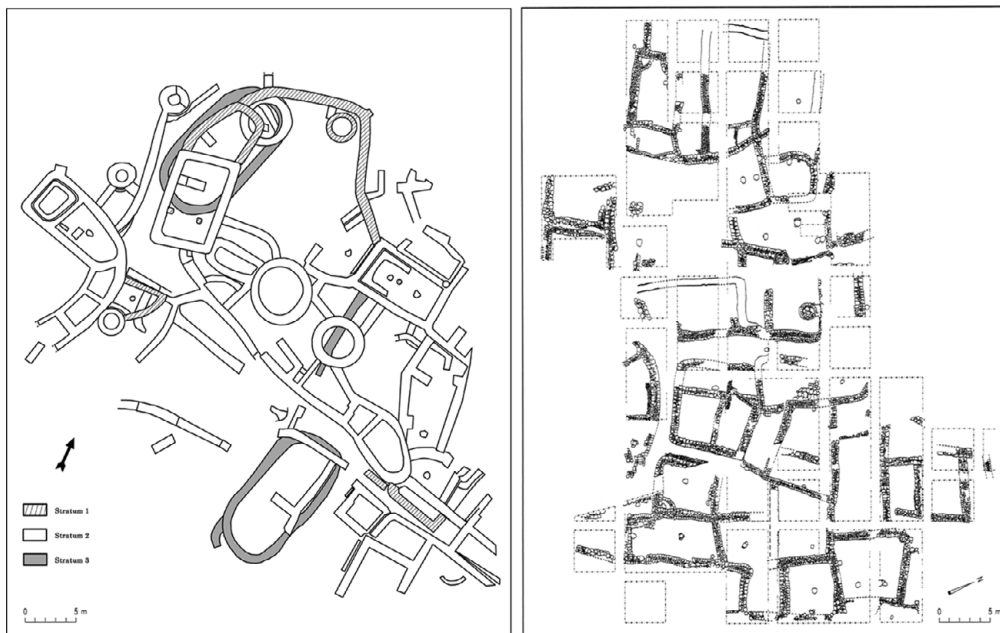


Figure 2.7 Plans of the EB IB village at Palmahim Quarry (superimposed on ovoid structures of the EB IA) and H. ‘Illin Tahtit. Courtesy of E. Braun.

tidy compact village composed of rectangular, multiroomed structures arranged around courtyards and separated by alleys. Similar architecture can be seen at the Jordan Valley sites of Tell Abu al-Kharaz and Tel Kitan.⁷⁴ Elsewhere, house complexes are less regular in outline: in the early phase of the EB IB village at Qiryat Ata, at Tel Qashish (Tell Qasis) and at 'En Shadud, the ovoid building tradition is carried over from EB IA, in double-apsidal buildings with parallel long walls and a central row of pillars.⁷⁵ At Palmahim Quarry and Megadim on the coast, and at Tel Bet Yerah, Tel esh-Shuna and Jericho in the Jordan Valley, rounded and rectilinear structures were built next to one another, creating an attractive village-scape of flat-roofed and domed structures within fenced household compounds.⁷⁶ The round structures range from about 2 to 4 meters in diameter, and sometimes more, and have therefore been variously labelled as silos, storage structures and houses. Common to most of sites is the division of the village into discreet house compounds, furnished with multiple rooms and open spaces and serving the full range of domestic activities: habitation, food preparation, crafts, storage and perhaps the sheltering of animals as well. Sarit Paz has commented on the flexibility of the compound as an organizing concept within the EB IB village, maintaining the autonomy of the house as a social unit.⁷⁷

The substantial compound excavated at Tel Bet Shean, Stratum M3, illustrates the wealth accumulated by some families in the late EB I Levant. Comprising at least six rooms and extending over more than 150 square meters, the compound was bounded by alleys on its north and west sides.⁷⁸ A large, 52-square-meter hall occupied the northwest corner of the compound (Figure 2.8). Like the other rooms, its floor and wall were plastered, and it was furnished with benches, a perfectly preserved grinding installation, and bases for fourteen pillars that held up its wood, wattle and daub roof. Destroyed by fire, apparently in the wake of an earthquake, the building contained masses of debris that sealed its contents. These included more than 100 ceramic vessels, copper

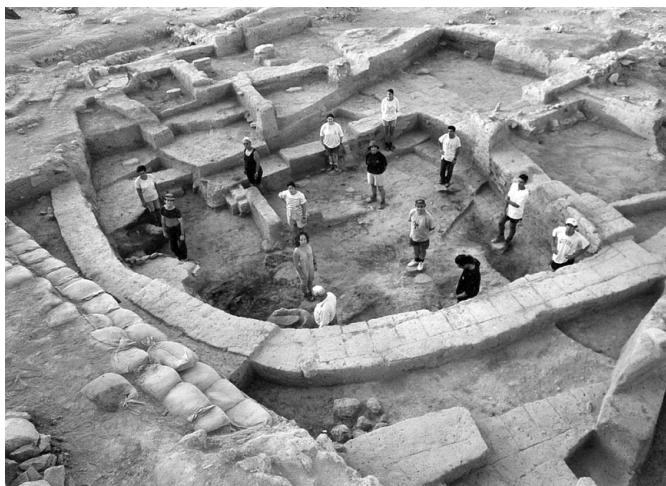


Figure 2.8 The large EB IB building at Tel Bet Shean, Area M, with figures standing on pillar bases. Photo by A. Mazar, Tel Beth Shean Expedition, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

tools and large quantities of burnt produce – wheat, barley and legumes. The capacity of the storage vessels found in the compound comes to about 5,000 liters. After its destruction, radiocarbon-dated to the mid-thirty-first century BCE, the compound was rebuilt, along more modest lines, in Stratum M2.

At Tel Abu al-Kharaz, east of the Jordan and some distance to the south, parts of what might be construed as a similar compound were excavated.⁷⁹ Destroyed, like Bet Shean Stratum M3, in an intense conflagration (see Figure 2.18, below), the small excavated part of a rectilinear, multiroomed domestic compound contained storage spaces, a room with charred remnants of stored grain in jars, grindstones and a wooden trough that has been interpreted as part of a bakery, and a courtyard with a cooking hearth. Two burnt wooden sickles, their blades intact, are among the scores of domestic and personal objects (including a necklace, a mace head and copper tools) found in this complex. Radiocarbon dates place the destruction in the thirty-first century BCE.

Tel Shalem, a short distance south of Bet Shean, provides the most explicit evidence for late EB I fortification.⁸⁰ The remains exposed at this site, which appears to have been abandoned at the very start of the EB II, include a broad mudbrick fortification, built in several stages, that encircled a site (unexcavated) several hectares in size. A number of recent salvage excavations have reported the discovery of similarly dated walls (e.g., ‘En Zippori).⁸¹ While none of these sites survived the transition to EB II, it may be surmised that the concept of fortification was tested in the late EB I but became universal only in the following EB II period. On the east side of the Jordan, fortifications attributed to late EB I are reported from limited soundings at Pella.⁸²

Megiddo, in the Jezreel Valley, provides a striking example of public architecture on a grand scale. Recent excavations on the mound (Tel Megiddo) and at its foot (Megiddo East), as well as Braun’s renewed study of earlier excavation results, increasingly support the possibility that this was a dual settlement, consisting of a ceremonial center located on the natural hill that underlies the mound, and a large, dispersed village situated in the fields to its east.⁸³ A sequence of temples was built on the hill, beginning with the Stratum XIX shrine excavated by the Chicago Oriental Institute expedition.⁸⁴ This temple had two main phases (Strata J2 and J3, according to the Tel Aviv University numbering system) and was approached via a sloped, stone-paved courtyard. Later, the massive Stratum J4 “Great” temple was built above the earlier complex (Figure 2.9). This 1,100-square-meter structure, built symmetrically, to precise architectural specifications, had a large central hall furnished with a row of ten or twelve pillars and six pairs of enormous, alternately circular and rectangular, basalt offering tables. Part of the earlier, Stratum XIX temple courtyard pavement was given over to carefully arranged rows of small chalk and limestone slabs, many of which bore incised graffiti depicting a wide range of symbolic representations – anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and

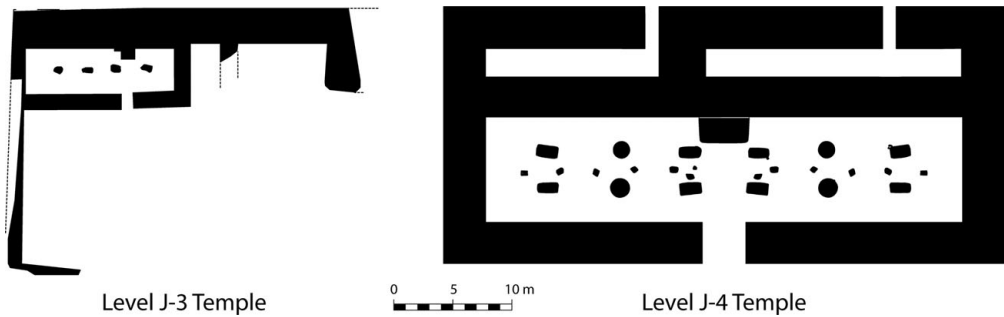


Figure 2.9 The EB IB temples at Megiddo: left, the Stratum J3 temple and courtyard; right, reconstructed plan of the Stratum J4 Great Temple that succeeded it. Courtesy of M. J. Adams.

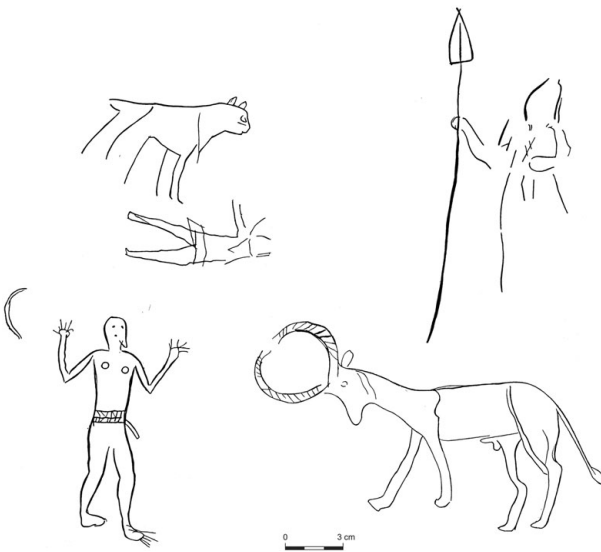


Figure 2.10 Selected incised drawings from the Megiddo picture pavement, showing a feline straddling a headless human corpse, the figure of a ruler with headdress and spear, a suppliant and a bull. Redrawn by N. Earon after Loud 1948: pls. 273, 275, 277.

geometric.⁸⁵ Many of these figures can be associated with concepts of charismatic leadership, expressed in a vernacular idiom, drawn from the Egyptian visual vocabulary. They include representations of crowned rulers, defeated enemies, figures of bulls and other wild animals (Figure 2.10). In some cases, there are several layers of incisions, which have been interpreted by Yekutieli as intentional, politically motivated defacement (see further, below). In the later structure, great quantities of mammal bones found in the long corridors behind the main hall reveal evidence of segregated deposition of sacrificial remains.⁸⁶ However, there were no other finds of a ritual nature that could be associated with the structure.

The large settlement excavated in the fields east of the mound is coeval with the various temple phases and exhibits a considerable level of organization. The uneven terrain was modified with large terraces and fills, above which

houses and larger (public?) compounds, were laid out on a regular plan. Like the temples themselves, Megiddo East exhibits considerable collective effort, but little evidence for individual wealth, staple-goods accumulation, or administration.

Many sites of the late EB IB, especially those of the Jordan Valley, experienced severe destructions, leaving rich archaeological assemblages. These have generally been attributed to one or more earthquakes, to which the rift valley is prone. However, earthquakes cannot be charged with the eventual abandonment of most of the EB I sites, as many were resettled after their destruction and survived for some time before being abandoned at the end of the EB I. The possibility of human agency in these destructions – perhaps associated with social unrest – therefore remains on the table (see below).

EB IB Cemeteries

Many late EB I cemeteries have been identified near excavated or surveyed village sites. West of the Jordan and in the Dead Sea basin they consist for the most part of subterranean cave and shaft tomb cemeteries, the most prominent published of these being Bab edh-Dhra' and Jericho in the Rift Valley, et-Tell ('Ai) and Tell el-Far'ah (North) in the central hills; the Assawir, Ma'abarot, Haqiryah (Tel Aviv) and Azor cemeteries on the coastal plain; and that of Gezer in the foothills.⁸⁷ East of the Jordan they consist of megalithic structures and tumuli,⁸⁸ and on the Lebanese coast, mainly of pithos burials at Byblos.⁸⁹

Cave-tomb cemeteries consist for the most part of collective secondary burials in round or bilobate carved chambers (Figure 2.11). The post-cranial bones were generally piled together, and the skulls placed alongside them. When space was needed for new inhumations, the previous bone piles would be either covered over, creating layered depositions, or moved to the sides of the chamber. Rarely, evidence of burning has been found in the chambers, but

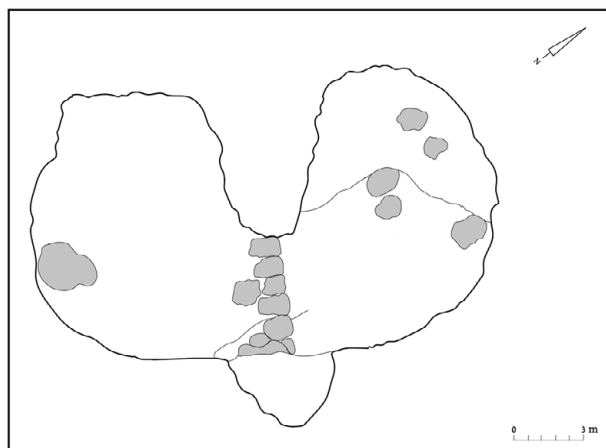


Figure 2.11 A bilobate EB IB tomb at Azor. Redrawn by I. Ben-Ezra after Ben-Tor 1975: fig. 3.

this appears to be a rite connected with the already dismembered skeletons (perhaps to expedite complete defleshing), rather than a full cremation. Tombs generally contain numerous ceramic containers, most often in a narrow range of types: small bowls, jugs, juglets and amphoriskoi. The quality of these ceramics is variable and it seems that there was a custom industry for miniature and even second-rate vessels intended for burial. It is virtually impossible to associate the grave goods with specific skeletons – a practice that was certainly intentional and could only have been intended to emphasize the collective nature of the tomb and of its ancestral population.

Beyond the large – but often monotonous – standard tomb assemblages, occasional prestige objects and other artifacts of a personal nature could – at the moment of interment, when the individual was still distinguishable from the other inhabitants of the tomb – reflect the status or vocation of the deceased. For example, terracotta figurines of pannier-bearing donkeys, found in several coastal tombs, might indicate the importance of trade to some of the interred (Figure 2.12).⁹⁰ A similar inference may be drawn from Egyptian palettes and imported ceramics found in the same region, or from Ninevite V pots, of north Syrian origin, found in the cemetery of ‘Ein Assawir. Another imported vessel, constituting a rare case of conspicuous consumption, is a silver bowl from the Tell el-Far’ah cemetery.⁹¹ Other possible markers of ascribed status are the occasional weapons – daggers and mace heads – that might have been indicative of some form of leadership.

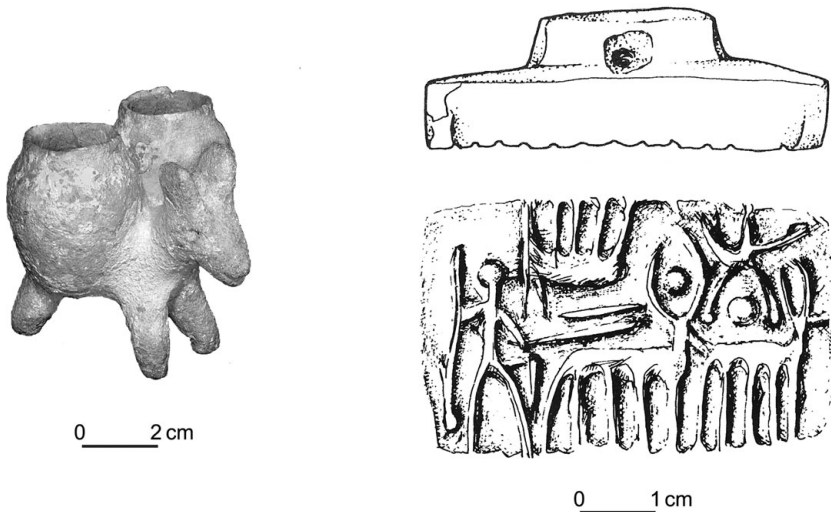


Figure 2.12 Representations of the EB I traction complex: a donkey bearing panniers from a tomb at Azor and a plowing scene on a stamp seal from Tel Kitan. Photo by M. Salzberger, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority; drawing by M. Ben-Gal, courtesy of E. Eisenberg.

In a study of the coastal plain cemeteries, Nathan Ben-Ari has noted that while tombs were intentionally carved (and natural caves rarely used) in proximity to village sites, a degree of separation was maintained, with the cemeteries located on the opposite bank of a stream or on the far end of a topographical saddle.⁹² Located near prominent landmarks, but usually concealed on a slope that overlooked the village or its fields, the principal social function of cemeteries seems to have been internal to the community, that is, maintenance of territorial attachments and bonds of kinship. The large number of interments in many of the tombs indicates that they were entered repeatedly, with each reentry presumably requiring a series of structured actions that involved the rearrangement of previous burials and the proper disposal of the newly deceased. These actions of ancestral commemoration included the libation and perhaps ingestion of liquids (for which most of the containers are best suited), and the eventual deposit of a standard mortuary assemblage, which may be taken as evidence of dominant collective values.⁹³ The exceptions to this rule – whether items of value added to the basic funeral kit or departures from standard treatments of the dead (such as rare primary inhumations) – should be seen as attempts to ascribe status, reflect a personal biography (in defiance of standard practice), or cope with unusual circumstances of death.

James Fraser, in his recent study of EB I table-dolmens of the Transjordanian highlands, notes a similar distribution for above-ground cemeteries.⁹⁴ He suggests that they too served sedentary communities for multiple burials, their construction being a function of their peculiar geological setting, which was not suitable for cave-carving.

Crafts and Specialization

The EB IB presents one of the high points – in variety and inventiveness, if not in quality – of ancient ceramic production in the southern Levant. Prominent regional traditions include the industries associated with Tel Erani and the southern inland plain at the start of the EB IB (“Erani C”), which have been described above, and a possibly contemporary (early EB IB) central Jordan Valley tradition characterized by a dark red fabric and prominent use of applied rope decorations. Um Hammad ware, first identified at the large site of the same name on the east bank of the river, is found on both sides of the valley.⁹⁵

Two painted traditions stand out in the Jordan Valley and along its eastern and western flanks. Line-painted pottery, which is more prominent in the lower and central valley, includes jars, jugs, amphoriskoi and spouted bowls that were decorated in groups of delicately lines painted on a white ground (often a lime-slip). “Grain-wash” (or band-slip) is a coarser painted decoration, applied in swift diagonal strokes with a single broad brush or with multiple brushes, to short-necked piriform jars, to tall, heavy-rimmed pithoi, or to holemouth spouted kraters. Pottery decorated in this fashion typifies the upper Jordan Valley, the eastern Jezreel Valley and the Kinneret basin.

Looking beyond the painted traditions, red slip dominates in the pottery industries of the coastal plain, central hills, inland valleys, and all points north. This is true both of domestic and mortuary contexts. Tel Kitan in the Jordan Valley sports an assemblage that combines grain-wash pithoi and jars alongside an exceptionally fine group of red-slipped consumption and storage vessels (Figure 2.13).⁹⁶ Bowls and jug necks were wheel-finished; closed vessels bear a deep red slip, burnished either continuously or in a fine net-pattern. A group

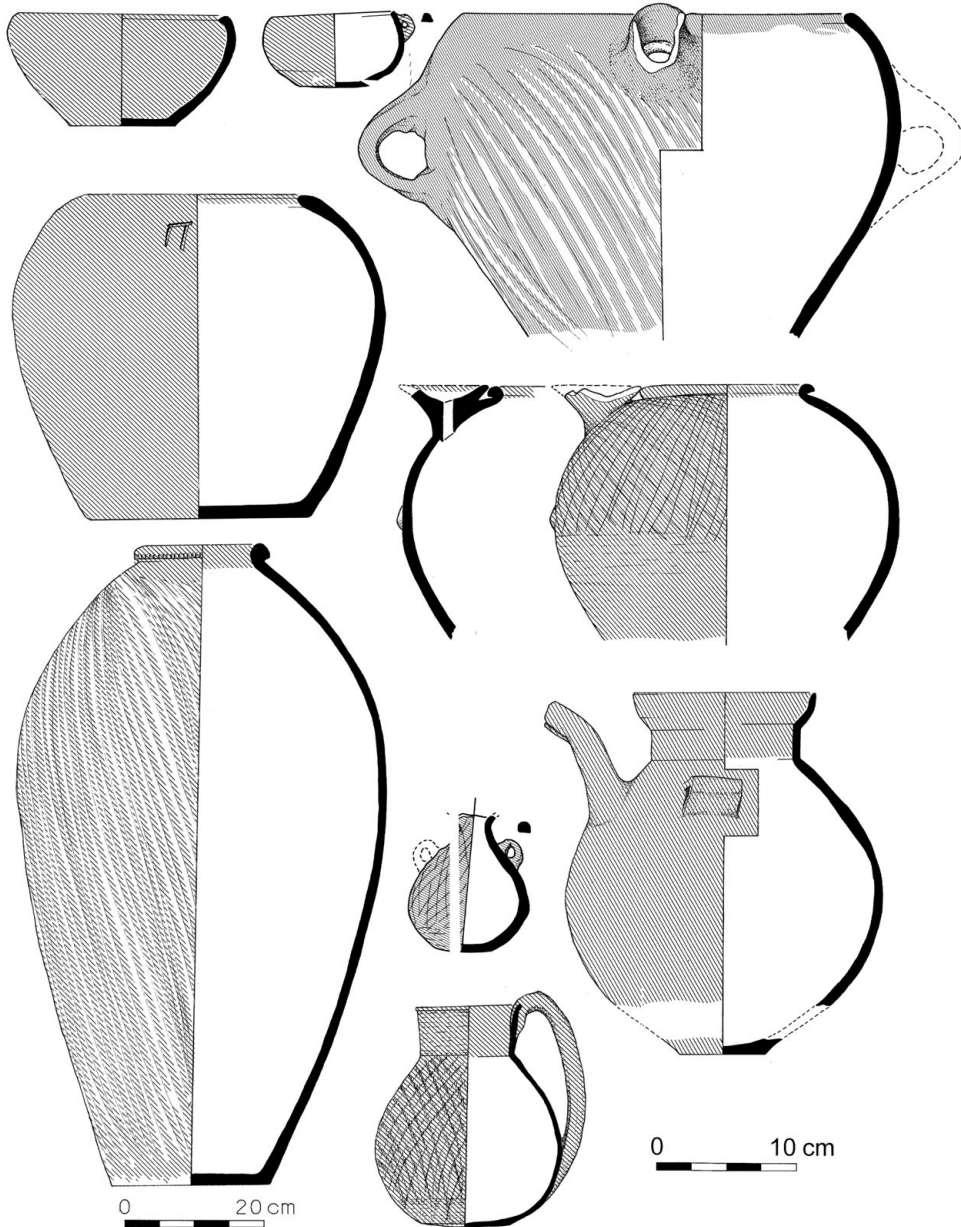


Figure 2.13 Selected EB IB pottery from Tel Kitan. Courtesy of Yael Rotem.

of bent-spout teapots – one of them double-spouted – represents one of the diagnostic features of the period and appears to emulate the bent-spout bottles and teapots of the contemporaneous Uruk assemblage. Tomb assemblages reproduce selected elements of the household ceramics, while adding many vessels characteristic only of burial contexts, such as the omphalos-based bowls and jugs of the Tel el-Far'ah (North) and Azor cemeteries.

Technological analyses of red-slipped and grain-wash vessels at Tel Bet Yerah showed different fabrics and unpredictable inclusions used to make typologically similar vessels. It was therefore suggested that EB I potters “[took] several routes to the production of a fairly uniform set of pots. Specialization decreed the form and appearance of the end-product –at least in its broad characteristics, but the specific *chaînes opératoires* could diverge.”⁹⁷ This points to the activity of several part-time specialists working within each tradition, the presence of itinerant potters using the materials most readily available to them or, what is most likely, a combination of both.

A late version of the Gray Burnished bowl and chalice, smaller than the EB IA vessels, carinated, and lacking the high, “oily” burnish or the typical flat lugs, was produced in separate industries in the region of Tel el Far'ah North and in the western Jezreel Valley.⁹⁸ The latter region also had its own bowl-rimmed jar and pithos workshops; the jars were occasionally decorated before firing with cylinder seal impressions, usually applied in a haphazard fashion, without much consideration for the orientation of the scenes. The typical theme on these seals is of animal processions or *tête-bêche* pairings, which usually consist of a dominant, powerful beast (usually a lion) and a passive or domesticated horned animal.⁹⁹ The geometric designs that appear on some seal impressions of this group are also often of zoomorphic origin, derived from fish or horned animals. The dominant theme here is therefore of the fecundity of nature, its power, and its ordering by humans (expressed, among other things, by the classification and representation effected in the seals themselves). A rectangular stamp seal from Tel Kitan, which may be interpreted as depicting a human figure guiding an ox-drawn plow, complements the themes of human control over nature (see Figure 2.12).¹⁰⁰

The motifs on the cylinder seals – stylized animal processions and geometric reductions of similar origin – testify to familiarity with glyptic traditions that developed in the Uruk periphery,¹⁰¹ but their decorative use indicates that the administrative origins of the practice of sealing had been lost. Thus, instead of applying the seals to disposable lumps of clay or other forms of documentation, endorsement or validation of individual transactions as in the region of origin, the “miscopied” practice was used by potters to attach significance to the pot for its entire use-life. This pseudo-administrative mode of sealing was to become a feature of Levantine ceramic production for the entirety of the Bronze Age and well beyond it.

Ceramic assemblages of the final decades of EB I reveal the presence, in limited quantities, of a highly fired ceramic termed Metallic ware (or, to set it apart from other, similarly named wares, Levantine Metallic ware [LMW]) due to the characteristic clinking sound it produces when struck. LMW includes carinated bowls, small platters and small containers (jugs and jars), made of clays obtained in outcrops of Lower Cretaceous deposits in the Mount Hermon massif.¹⁰² In the succeeding period, LMW expands to become a dominant industry in the southern Levant (where it may be termed South Levantine Metallic ware) and is emulated at sites situated on the central/north Levantine coast (North Levantine Metallic ware).

The lithic industry shows no significant change in relation to the EB IA: Canaanite blades and tabular (fan) scrapers are the main specialized products of the era, alongside the expedient production of ad hoc flake tools. Egyptian-type twisted bladelets, locally made, as well as pressure-flaked knives imported from Egypt, occur in the regions of Egyptian contact (see below).

After a relative decline in the art of basalt-working in EB IA, there was a resurgence in later EB I, paralleling the rise of ceramic and other specializations.¹⁰³ Alongside the ubiquitous discoid spindle whorls, sometimes serving as loom weights, basalt tournettes are increasingly common, especially in the north.¹⁰⁴ The most notable products of the basalt workshops are the two- and four-handled mortars typical of the Jordan Valley, which at times display exquisite workmanship (especially evident in an example bearing two ibexes in relief, from a tomb in 'En Hanaziv, near Bet Shean). Several of the mortars of this type found at Tel Bet Yerah were stained with red ochre. Rarer are knobbed basalt bowls and chalices, of which the most complete example comes from a tomb in Megiddo.¹⁰⁵ The effort expended in the 'En Hanaziv mortar and the Megiddo chalice are both expressions of the occasional forays into conspicuous consumption evidenced in EB IB burials.

EB IB Society and Economy: Signs of Inequality

Although physical data for EB I subsistence practices is spotty, it is clear that the basic building blocks of the Mediterranean agricultural economy, as described earlier in this chapter, remained at the foundation of Levantine village communities. Large quantities of economic plant seeds recovered in destruction levels at Tel Bet Shean and Tell Abu al-Kharaz consist of largely of two-rowed barley (the most abundant cereal at Bet Shean), naked and emmer wheat (dominant at Abu el-Kharaz) and pulses (chickpea, lentil and horsebean), with only small quantities of grape and olive at both sites.¹⁰⁶ Chaff and weeds recovered in the Bet Shean courtyards indicate that crops were processed, at least in part, within the dwelling compound, rather than at a central or communal location. In their study of a late EB I community in the south-eastern Dead Sea plain, White, Chesson and Schaub described a diverse

agricultural base, including cereals (mainly barley), figs, and an unusual concentration of grape and flax seeds. As the site is located well within the arid zone, farming would have been limited to irrigated plots in protected enclaves along the Wadi Numayra.¹⁰⁷ As noted above with regard to the arid-zone sites in EB IA, water management in arid zones was well developed in the fourth millennium. This is particularly true of the southeastern Dead Sea plain and the Arabah Valley, where the proximity of copper ore deposits in Wadi Feinan and Timna had attracted permanent settlement since Chalcolithic times. Limited zooarchaeological evidence, skewed as a result of discrepancies in collection methods and excavation contexts across different sites, reveals no fixed pattern in the utilization of small and large cattle, pig and other species in EB IB.¹⁰⁸

It therefore emerges that, despite the intensification of EB IB settlement and the growth of mega-villages at sites like Bet Yerah, esh-Shuna, Assawir and Megiddo, there is little evidence of far-reaching structural change. Levantine EB IB society was a village society, with sporadic local attempts to garner political and/or economic power. This statement is based on a number of observations. First, most of the “mega-sites” that have been investigated to any extent – such as Bet Yerah, Megiddo East, ‘Ein Assawir or Palmahim – show the village layout writ large. The principal building units are heterogeneous courtyard compounds, and little can be seen in terms of planning or organization of common areas. Second, despite the evidence for the accumulation of staple goods in large households, like that of Bet Shean, there is no evidence for institutional regulation of economic activity. As far as we know (and we know very little, it must be admitted), each household functioned as an independent economic unit, and no evidence has surfaced for internal functional division within sites (such as centralized storage), for herd management and regulated meat supply or for commodity production. Regarding the last, the proliferation of ceramic workshops, traditions and styles points to the existence of small-scale production and exchange networks serving fairly close-knit groups. Within such networks, each product would be recognized as a product of a specific social interaction. Such systems, based on a structure of mutual obligations, would have had only a limited component of alienable, marketable commodity production. This was still – and would remain for some time to come – a “human economy,” focused on the provision of material needs, and hence more concerned with the disposition of people than the creation of wealth.¹⁰⁹

The ceremonial center at Megiddo offers the most telling evidence for the potential, as well as the limitations, of collective building projects in a village society. The results of prolonged excavations on the summit of the mound, on its slopes and in the settlement to its east form a fascinating and complex ensemble. The most recent research suggests that activity on the mound and its slopes was mainly of a ritual nature: the temple precinct, described earlier, was

on the summit, while the southeast slope contained a number of elaborate shaft tombs and adjacent structures that might have been devoted to mortuary activities.¹¹⁰ We have already seen that the earlier temple precinct attracted expressions of power adopted from the Egyptian cultural sphere (the incised pavement) and also yielded a number of Egyptian prestige objects. The “Great Temple” is, of course, a manifestation of power in its own right. However, nothing in the temple itself can testify to anything beyond occasional gatherings and rituals that left no lasting imprint. It shows no evidence of extensive economic activity or of any permanent presence of temple personnel. It has no ritual deposits, religious iconography or cult paraphernalia. The building can therefore be characterized as the product of considerable collective effort – a form of popular mobilization for the construction of a ceremonial center – unaccompanied by any kind of religious-economic institutionalization. Once built, the precinct served for temporary, seasonal gatherings, but did not create a religious order. As a place of memory, it did not answer individual needs, but collective ones. The locus of individual piety, as well as of ancestral commemoration, must have still been limited to the house and the tomb.

Just as the Megiddo temples do not testify to structural change, but only to the potential of corporate action in the densely occupied valley regions, so too can the scattered evidence for fortification testify to local initiatives for collective action. So long as such construction was not accompanied by additional changes in social organization – as will be shown to occur in EB II – it should be seen as one of several possible avenues of channeling the productive potential of a developed village society by a thin or even temporary stratum of leadership. It may, however, be suggested that the effort dedicated to mobilizing labor for public construction is itself testimony to the intention of elites to parade the power of the communities that they headed, just as aberrations in the uniform funeral kit testify to a wish to distinguish certain individuals from the rest. In this sense, the monumental structures, like the prestige objects in tombs or the accumulations of produce at Bet Shean, signal internal tensions in EB IB Levantine society, a tension that emerges from contradictions between the absence of institutionalized stratification and the ambitions of a few to demonstrate their wealth and power.

THE FIRST EGYPTIAN INTRUSION: THE NORTHEAST AFRICAN COLONY ON THE SOUTHWEST MEDITERRANEAN COAST

The growth of the thriving early EB IB villages of the southern coastal plain did not go unnoticed by their (somewhat distant) neighbors in Egypt. It will be recalled that late fourth millennium Egypt was in a state of flux leading to the creation of competing polities in the north (Nile Delta) and south (Upper Egypt). These polities sponsored emergent ideologies of royal power and centralized economic institutions. A focal point of royal ideology was the

sanctification of the body and image of the king, to whom was ascribed the power to subjugate distant lands. Royal construction, royal ceremonies and the cult of the king demanded materials and products obtained at the ends of the earth – namely, from western Asia (lumber and resin, copper and silver, precious stones, wine and oil) and Nubia (gold, granite, exotic plants, spices). Economic centralization required the acquisition of advanced agricultural and administrative technologies.¹¹¹

A degree of contact between Nile Valley and the south Levantine communities had existed in the Chalcolithic and EB IA. The most convincing evidence for this contact comes from Nile Delta sites (such as Ma'adi and Buto), where evidence of the presence of people with Levantine technologies and practices takes the form of construction techniques and ceramic production derived from the Beersheba Chalcolithic, as well as direct imports of EB IA ceramics, including Gray Burnished ware.¹¹² Their presence should be viewed as the consequence of a natural back-and-forth movement between two regions – the eastern delta and southwest Levantine coast – that are only a few days' travel from each other. At the start of the EB IB, however, an abrupt change of pace occurred: a great deal of evidence has been amassed, throughout the Nile Valley and along the northern coast of Sinai, for a lively flow of products and people from the Levant toward Egypt. Pottery of the Erani C type appears in scores of sites along the north Sinai land route and in elite and royal burials in Upper Egypt. This comes to a climax in Tomb U-j, in the pre-dynastic royal cemetery at Abydos, where, in the tomb of local ruler, a chamber was exposed containing scores of pots of southwest Levantine type.¹¹³ These included imported vessels as well as locally made imitations, the latter manufactured, perhaps, by a Levantine potter residing in Egypt. The vessels contained, among other things, wine residues, and were doubtless intended to convey the ability of the king to obtain the produce of the Asiatic vineyards. But it has been suggested that the ambitions of this ruler and of his contemporaries extended beyond the products to the agricultural technology that was the basis for the prosperity of the thriving Erani C villages.¹¹⁴ It did not, in fact, take long before Egyptians acquired new practices of plowing, agricultural storage, viti- and viniculture, and apparently dairying as well. What the Levantine villagers received in return is not clear: the entire process may have been effected through occasional contacts and gift-exchange, as there is no evidence for the accumulation of Egyptian goods in Erani C communities or of any kind of political advantage accrued through contact with Egypt. Whatever the case may be, this pattern of asymmetric contact, evidenced in Egypt alone, was about to change decisively in the wake of the events that led to the unification of Egypt under a single ruler.

In the late thirty-second or early thirty-first century BCE, Upper and Lower Egypt were unified by the ruler of Upper Egypt, Narmer. At approximately the same time, a growing amount of archaeological evidence points to the establishment of sedentary settlements with Nile Valley material-culture

assemblages in the southwest coastal Levant.¹¹⁵ The nature of this fixed presence, or colony, is still a matter of debate: Was it an extension of the unified Egyptian polity, of one of its regional precursors, or perhaps a colony founded by exiles from the defeated polities of Lower Egypt? Did the colony's inhabitants trade freely with indigenous communities, or did they impose their presence as military conquerors, exploiting and enslaving local farmers? Whatever the nature of their presence might have been, its extent and components are quite clear: the colony consisted of a core zone, where sites with a predominantly Egyptian material culture have been identified, with the site of Tell es-Sakan, near modern Gaza City, at its center. Surrounding this core zone was a belt of settlements in which Egyptian and indigenous material culture and people appear to coexist. The presence of actual Nile Valley settlers in the core zone and in the contact zone around it finds expression in the presence of everyday objects made in Egyptian technique and style; these include coarse clay bread molds, large ceramic beer vats, lotus-shaped bowls, pressure-flaked flint knives and more. Some of these objects were imported from the Nile Valley, but most were made of locally available materials.

Tell es-Sakan, the main settlement, is a large site encircled by massive mudbrick fortifications that grew by accretion over a considerable length of time (Figure 2.14).¹¹⁶ The interior of the site is a dense warren of domestic structures furnished with storage and cooking installations characterized as Egyptian by the excavators. Finds included many ceramic vessels, local and imported, almost all of them of Egyptian type, and ornaments, figurines and evidence of Egyptian administrative practices: imported wine jars, including



Figure 2.14 The Tell es-Sakan EB IB mudbrick fortification lines, visible to the right of and beneath the standing figure. Courtesy of P. de Miroschedji.

some bearing the incised royal *serekh* (emblem and name) of Narmer and clay sealings bearing cylinder-seal impressions.

Additional convincing evidence of Egyptian administrative practices comes from the diminutive site of 'En Besor where, in an isolated building that appears to have served as a way-station or inn, dozens of seal-impressed lumps of clay, used as sealings for jars or sacks, were found alongside rich Egyptian-style ceramic and lithic assemblages and elements of an Egyptian bakery-brewery.¹¹⁷ Although the precise significance of the seal impressions at 'En Besor and at other sites of the colony cannot be deciphered, they contain signs and symbols that might represent names of places or persons, as well as quantities, and thus comprise the only evidence in the Levant for any kind of regulation of the movement of commodities, taxes or supplies. Various explanations for their large number at this small site may be offered. The site could have played a role in the transshipment of goods between Levantine and Nile Valley communities, or the sealed goods may have been provisions intended for trader caravans or captive labor crews making their way toward Egypt.

Tel Halif Terrace (Nahal Tillah) represents the contact zone, where people with Egyptian and Levantine cultural assemblages appear to have lived side by side. Limited excavations in several parts of the 12-hectare site uncovered a stratigraphic sequence extending from Chalcolithic to the end of EB I. Stratum II, which contained the stone foundations of houses built in the local Levantine style, provided a wealth of Egyptian remains, including a bread oven surrounded by hundreds of fragments of bread molds, several ceramic fragments incised with a *serekh*, and several seal impressions on a bulla.¹¹⁸ The excavators also attached considerable importance to a cave approached by a long corridor that resembles the plan of pre-dynastic Egyptian tombs (the scant finds within the cave were equivocal as to its original function or the ethnicity of the simple inhumation found within it). Quantitative analysis of the pottery at this site revealed a distinct pattern of spatial segregation between Canaanite and Egyptian types, suggesting on-site interaction between two ethnic populations. A similar situation has been observed at Lod, in the central plain, making it the northernmost site exhibiting intensive contact between Egyptians and locals. Remarkably, the site at Lod yielded freshwater Nile mussels and fragments of imported Egyptian wine jars alongside the locally made bread molds and lotus-shaped bowls, suggesting the ongoing provision of supplies from the homeland to the expatriate Nile Valley population.¹¹⁹

Tel Erani ('Areini), where the earliest evidence for the presence of Egyptians had been discovered in the late 1950s in the form of inscribed *serekh* signs of King Narmer, was also the first to reveal an assemblage of locally made Egyptian pottery, from a stratum now understood to postdate the Erani C phase. A selective publication of the ceramic repertoire from this site indicates that the site was a crucible of Canaanite–Egyptian interaction,



Figure 2.15 Incised serekh of Narmer on an imported Egyptian jar found at Arad. Photo by C. Amit. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

producing hybrid ceramic forms made by potters working in both Egyptian and local traditions.¹²⁰ Other contact zone sites include the neighboring sites of Small Tel Malhata and Arad, in the northern Negev. Both sites provided small quantities of imported Egyptian ceramics only (with no local production), including several carrying an incised *serekh* (Figure 2.15).¹²¹

Beyond the core and contact zones, only sporadic relations, seemingly comprised of gift-exchange and occasional forays from the Egyptian zone, were maintained between the Egyptian and Levantine communities. Evidence for these two types of contact comes from Megiddo and from a cache of copper objects found some sixty years ago near the modern coastal plain village of Kfar Monash. As noted earlier, it seems increasingly likely that Megiddo was a dual settlement, consisting of a ceremonial center on the mound and a large village at its foot. In the ceremonial center, the incised pavement leading to the earlier temple of Stratum XIX (J2–J3) has been linked to Egyptian concepts of charismatic leadership.¹²² In addition to the pavement, Egyptian prestige objects and knick-knacks were recovered in all three EB IB strata at Megiddo (J2–J4, according to the Tel Aviv University numbering), including a ceremonial spearhead.¹²³ These might be construed as evidence of a local elite maintaining its status through contact with the Egyptian colony, while purveying materials and goods coveted by the Egyptians from more northerly parts of the Levant (especially lumber and resin). Another scenario places Egyptian agents or delegations at the Megiddo temples themselves; the graffiti and articles of Egyptian origin would then be offerings or expressions of respect to the local ceremonial center.

In this context, the cache of copper objects found in 1962 near Kfar Monash might offer a tangible demonstration of the nature of the services rendered to – or of the activities initiated by – the Egyptians.¹²⁴ The cache was found in a

field, devoid of any archaeological context. It comprised twenty axe, adze and chisel blades; a large saw, decorated with a bull's head engraved in a shallow pointillé technique; several daggers and spearheads; a knife; a large mace head; a large crescent-shaped object and hundreds of copper "scales" – curved and crinkled 10 × 5 cm plates of unknown use that could be interpreted as a form of currency. Since all these objects were in usable condition, the cache appears to have been a carefully stored assemblage, intended for recovery and reuse, rather than scrap intended for recycling. The most stylized tools – the knife and saw – have Egyptian parallels, and the assemblage as a whole can be assumed to be contemporaneous with the Egyptian colony of Narmer's time. It has even been suggested that the cache comprised the equipment of an Egyptian work crew, sent to obtain lumber north of the colony.¹²⁵

Beyond such circumstantial evidence, and assuming that Egyptians came to the southern Levant in order to exploit its resources, are we in a position to know what it was that was sent southward to the Egyptian colony, and possibly to the Nile Valley itself? The relative dearth of Levantine jars in Naqada IIIB–C1 Egypt (in contrast to the earlier floruit of Levantine imports, in Naqada IIIA1–2) suggests that Levantine wine and olive oil were no longer in demand there, but resins and other aromatic oils, required for rituals and mortuary rites in Egypt, could have been supplied in small containers, whereas lumber, needed for royal construction, might have been conveyed by sea. The abundance of evidence for beer and bread production in the Egyptian outposts in the Levant could attest that there were many mouths to feed – perhaps of captive laborers destined to serve the royal estates in Egypt. Such a scenario could complement the evidence for local resentment of, and resistance to, the Egyptian presence, and to the rejection of Egyptian influence in the Levant after Narmer.

Understanding the Egyptian Presence in Southwest Canaan

When the possibility of early dynastic Egyptian contact was first broached by Yadin about half a century ago, the "default value" of military conquest was assumed.¹²⁶ This assumption was soon bolstered by the discovery, at Tel Erani, of *serekh* fragments bearing the name of Narmer, the ostensible unifier of Egypt and founder of the first dynasty.¹²⁷ In the 1970s and 1980s, however, evidence began to mount for prolonged contact, and a trade diaspora (or core-periphery) model replaced that of brief military incursion.¹²⁸ Evidence for prolonged contact included the discovery of several sites in southwest Canaan with numerous finds of Egyptian character, including objects of everyday use such as bread molds; the discovery of the north Sinai overland route, dotted with sites containing evidence of both Canaanite and predynastic Egyptian contacts; the discovery and rediscovery of Egyptian tomb deposits with Canaanite Early Bronze I pots; and last – and perhaps most telling – the

discovery of Egyptian administrative paraphernalia (impressed clay bullae and incised jars) in southwest Canaan.

With the advent of routine petrographic provenience analysis and refined ceramic synchronisms with Egypt, several anomalies cropped up in the trade model. For example, while the *serekh*-bearing jars were all imported to Canaan, the bullae were found to be local, implying different or evolving administrative functions. Furthermore, a chronological disparity began to become evident between the main phase of Canaanite materials found in Egypt – Naqada IID–IIIA (Dynasty “oo”) – and that of Egyptian materials in Canaan – Naqada IIIB–C (Dynasty o–i). Last, hybrid ceramic traditions began to be identified, “Egyptianizing” in Canaan and, most lately, “Canaanizing” in Egypt. These anomalies required that a more complex model be adopted, allowing for evolution in response to changes in both the Egyptian and Canaanite milieus.

The more recent descriptions of EBA Egypto–Levantine interaction propose a sequence of phases, each characterized by a different set of motivations for interaction and by concomitant variations in the symmetry of the relations. Detailed considerations of both the Nile Valley and southwest Levantine evidence support the simplified scheme shown in Table 2.1.¹²⁹

Another point concerns the actual number of Egyptians involved. If the main impetus for the Egyptian presence was the procurement of raw materials (presumably wine, olive oil, and softwood), a small number of agents could have been sufficient to establish and maintain asymmetrical contact. The concatenation of phenomena in time and space could, in theory, result from the impact of trade, emulation, “third space” entanglements or even estate administration.¹³⁰ There are, however, several problems with this trade-based model: (1) the virtual absence of Canaanite products in Egypt in the third phase of interaction (Dynasty o), coupled with the apparent decrease of Canaanite presence in northern Sinai; (2) the production of wine in Egypt and evidence suggesting its exportation to Canaan rather than from it; (3) the absence of evidence for any kind of large-scale raw material procurement in

Table 2.1 Stages of Nile Valley–Levant interaction in the Early Bronze I

Stage	EB I phase	Naqada phase	Type of interaction	Main sites
Early	A	IB–IID	Small-scale, symmetrical	Maadi, Buto Ib; Site H, Taur Ikhbeineh
Middle	B early	IIIA1–2	Intensive, asymmetrical interaction favoring Egypt; most finds in Egypt	Tomb U-j; Erani C; North Sinai
Late	B late	IIIB–C1	Egyptian colony in southwest Canaan; most finds in Canaan	Erani B (V); ‘En Besor; Sakan; etc.

sites putatively associated with trade and (4) the uncertainty as to the ability of the nascent Egyptian state to support a trade colony.

The discovery of Tell es-Sakan seems to have scored some very telling points in favor of another alternative: that of the self-contained Egyptian implant or, to be more precise, the temporary annexation of southwest Canaan to Egypt. Arguing in favor of this alternative are the heavy fortifications of Sakan, suggesting a military presence and the need to intimidate the local populace, and the evidence – as reported by the excavators – of considerable administrative activity at the site. Such a site as Sakan must have been built at the initiative of a central state power, rather than by individual entrepreneurs, and its very existence comprises a clear expression of the asymmetry of Egypt–Canaanite interaction.

Keeping in mind that a full report on the finds from Sakan remains to be published, the issues in debate appear to be the following: the impetus for the massive Egyptian effort, the duration of the colony, and the degree of aggression exhibited toward the locals. Regarding the last point, opinions range from those who see conflict and resistance¹³¹ to those who propose a far more integrative and entangled relationship.¹³² There is some support for the former proposition, that is, that Egyptian presence was not well integrated in the local scene. The absence of cemeteries within the core zone is noteworthy, testifying not only to Egyptian aversion to being buried outside the Nile Valley (a theme commonly encountered in later texts) but to the exclusion of locals from the Egyptian zones. It also suggests that Egyptians saw their presence as temporary, rather than as colonizers of “New Egypt.” The massive fortification of Tell es-Sakan is a sign of insecurity, suggesting that Egyptians felt threatened. If the scenario I have suggested above with regard to captive laborers being sent to Egypt is true, their fears may have been well founded. Last, the absence of any recognizably Egyptian contributions to south Levantine culture in the period immediately following their withdrawal speaks to an uneasy relationship between the two communities.

THE END OF THE EARLY BRONZE I

Radiometric dating of the EB I–II transition places it between the early thirty-first and early thirtieth centuries, and it is likely that it did not occur all at once, but during a span of decades. Still, it may be characterized as a dramatic transition, since scores of EB I sites, including major sites such as Megiddo, Bet Shean, Tel Shalem and Tell esh-Shuna, failed to complete it and were abandoned, some for the duration of EB II and some for much longer. At sites that were resettled in EB II, the transition was usually expressed in the complete destruction of the earlier village and new construction in EB II (Figure 2.16).



Figure 2.16 The late EB IB destruction at Tell Abu al-Kharaz. Courtesy of P. Fischer.

What could have been the cause of this universal abandonment of EB I villages across the entire landscape, from the Arabah Valley to the Lebanese coast? Two possible explanations – or, rather, speculations based on circumstantial evidence – may be offered. The first is related to the Egyptian withdrawal from the southwest coastal plain, either late in the reign of Narmer or early in that of his successor, Aha; the second – to internal social contradictions in EB IB society. The withdrawal of the Egyptians must have had significant implications in the regions adjacent to the colony and at sites that interacted with it. Within the colony and in its immediate surroundings, most sites were abandoned (e.g., Tell es-Sakan, ‘En Besor, Tel Halif Terrace) or were severely reduced in size (Lod). Megiddo, which seems to have benefited from Egyptian patronage, appears to have fissioned at the end of EB I, to be resettled only in EB III.¹³³ Still, these changes do not seem to have been the cause of the massive transformations in the valley heartlands, at sites like Bet Shean, Tel Kitan, Tel Shalem or Tell esh-Shuna, which were abandoned, or Tel Bet Yerah, Tell es-Sa‘idiya or Tell Abu el-Kharaz, which were destroyed and rebuilt. To explain the transitions in the heartland, which had only ephemeral contact with Egypt, we must assume an internally generated crisis emerging, perhaps from the inequalities, the absence of staple wealth redistribution or the attrition of the levelling mechanisms inherent in village societies. The evidence for such internal contradictions – apart from the fact of the physical dissolution of villages – can be gleaned from the nature of transformations in the succeeding period, the Early Bronze II. This period, as will immediately become evident, is characterized by an emphasis on the values of uniformity, in a manner that contrasts sharply with the diversity of late EB I.

NOTES

- 1 Braun 1989; 2012.
- 2 Yekutieli 2000; 2001.
- 3 S.A. Rosen 2011; 2013.
- 4 These terms were introduced by K.M. Kenyon (1965) and P. de Miroschedji (1971), receiving wide usage; later, Miroschedji (1989b: 64), suggested that the terms be abandoned.
- 5 Rosen 2007.
- 6 Clarke et al. 2015.
- 7 Joffe and Dessel 1995; Golani 2004; Braun et al. 2013.
- 8 Wright 1937; 1958.
- 9 Macdonald, Starkey and Harding 1932; Roshwalb 1981; Perrot 1961.
- 10 De Vaux 1971: 233–234; Kenyon 1979: 66; Ben-Tor 1989; Gonen 1992b; for a contemporary dissenting view, see Richard 1987.
- 11 Saidah 1979; Braun 1997; Eisenberg, Gopher and Greenberg 2001.
- 12 Betts 1991.
- 13 Yekutieli and Gophna 1994; Golani and van den Brink 1999.
- 14 Eisenberg 1993a.
- 15 Oren and Yekutieli 1992; Alon and Yekutieli 1995; Dessel 2009.
- 16 Schaub and Rast 1989.
- 17 Braun 2004: 62; 2013: 142.
- 18 Dunand 1973; Artin 2010.
- 19 Yekutieli 2000; Lovell and Rowan 2011; Braun and Roux 2013.
- 20 Stager 1985; later elaborated upon by Esse (1991) and Joffe (1993).
- 21 Yekutieli 2014.
- 22 As demonstrated for the EBA of Transjordan by Philip (2001).
- 23 Gophna and Portugali 1988; Peilstöcker 2003.
- 24 Marfoe 1995; Greenberg 2002.
- 25 Nicolle and Braemer 2012; Müller-Neuhof 2014.
- 26 Braun 1997.
- 27 Horwitz 1997a.
- 28 Eisenberg, Gopher and Greenberg 2001; Yannai 2006.
- 29 Greenberg, Rotem and Paz 2013.
- 30 *‘Atiqot* 2004.
- 31 Saidah 1979.
- 32 Hanbury-Tenison 1986; Polcaro et al. 2014.
- 33 Betts 1991.
- 34 Braemer et al. 2009; Nicolle and Braemer 2012.
- 35 Genz and Adams 1995; Meadows 2001; Muniz 2007.
- 36 Smuts 1995; Chesson 2003.
- 37 Horwitz 1997a, b; Wichter Kansa 2004; Berger forthcoming.
- 38 Meadows 2001.

- 39 Yekutieli 2001.
40 Roux and Miroschedji 2009.
41 Yekutieli 2001; Baumgarten 2004; Braun and Gophna 2004; Golani 2004; Khalaily 2004.
42 E.g., Braun 1997; Eisenberg 2001; Greenberg, Rotem and Paz 2013.
43 Wright 1937; 1958; Amiran 1969.
44 Goren and Zuckerman 2000.
45 Lapp 1968; Schaub and Rast 1989.
46 Betts 1992.
47 Yekutieli 2001; Greenberg, Rotem and Paz 2013.
48 Rosen 1997; Gurova 2013; Müller-Neuhof 2013; Manclossi, Rosen and Miroschedji 2016.
49 Braun 1990; Rowan 2004.
50 Roux and Miroschedji 2009.
51 Childe 1954.
52 Wengrow 2010a: 60.
53 Segal, Halicz and Kamenski 2004.
54 Hauptmann 2007; Klimscha 2011.
55 Schick 1998; Ashkenazi 2008.
56 Nativ 2014.
57 Weiner 1992: 59.
58 Nativ 2014; Rowan 2014.
59 Greenberg 2001.
60 Schaub and Rast 1989.
61 Chesson 2001; 2007.
62 Chesson 2007; Kersel and Chesson 2013.
63 S. Paz 2006; Y. Paz 2006.
64 Dunand 1973; Artin 2008; 2014–2015.
65 Cf. Bradbury and Philip 2017.
66 Brandl 1989; Kempinski and Gilead 1991; Yekutieli 2006; Cialowicz, Yekutieli and Czarnowicz 2016; Yegorov and Milevski 2017.
67 Kroeper 1989; Oren 1989.
68 Baumgarten, Gorzalczy and Onn 2008; Rosenberg and Golani 2012.
69 Mazar and Miroschedji 1996; Golani and Storchan 2014.
70 Yekutieli 2000; Nigro 2007: fig. 20.
71 Braun 1985; Golani 2003.
72 Esse 1991.
73 Savage, Falconer and Harrison 2007. For most surveys, “EB I” is considered equivalent to EB IB, since identification was largely based on EB IB diagnostics. For the West Bank data, see Greenberg and Keinan 2009, and the searchable database at <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/map/collection/p15799coll74>.
74 Braun 2008a; Fischer 2008; Eisenberg and Rotem 2016.

- 75 Ben-Tor, Bonfil and Zuckerman 2003; Braun 1985; Golani 2003.
- 76 Philip 2001; Nigro 2007; Braun 2008b; Wolff 2008; Greenberg and Paz 2014.
- 77 Paz 2012.
- 78 Mazar and Rotem 2009.
- 79 Fischer 2008.
- 80 Eisenberg 1996.
- 81 Milevski and Getzov 2014.
- 82 Bourke 2014.
- 83 Braun 2013; Adams 2014; Adams, Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2014; Ussishkin 2015.
- 84 Loud 1948.
- 85 Loud 1948: pls. 271–282.
- 86 Wapnish and Hesse 2000.
- 87 De Vaux and Steve 1949; de Vaux 1951; Kenyon 1960; 1965; Callaway 1964; Ben-Tor 1975; Dar 1977; Seger 1988; Schaub and Rast 1989; Yannai 2016. A detailed analysis of fourteen coastal sites is included in Ben-Ari 2010.
- 88 E.g., Dubis and Dabrowski 2002; Polcaro et al. 2014; Fraser 2018.
- 89 Artin 2010.
- 90 Amiran 1985.
- 91 De Vaux 1951: pl. 27; Yannai and Grosinger 2000.
- 92 Ben-Ari 2010.
- 93 Ilan 2002.
- 94 Fraser 2018.
- 95 Bar 2010.
- 96 Eisenberg and Rotem 2016.
- 97 Greenberg and Iserlis 2014: 57–59.
- 98 Goren and Zuckerman 2000.
- 99 Joffe 2001; Greenberg 2013.
- 100 Eisenberg 1992.
- 101 Ben-Tor 1978.
- 102 Greenberg and Porat 1996.
- 103 Braun 1990; Rosenberg and Golani 2012; Rosenberg and Greenberg 2014; Rosenberg and Chasan 2018.
- 104 Greenberg and Iserlis 2014.
- 105 Guy 1938: fig. 21.
- 106 Fischer 1997; Simchoni and Kislev 2012.
- 107 White, Chesson and Schaub 2014.
- 108 Hesse and Wapnish 2001; Horwitz 2003.
- 109 Polanyi 1977: 34; Graeber 2012.
- 110 Ilan 2013.
- 111 Wengrow 2006.

- 112 Levy and van den Brink 2002; Cialowicz 2016.
- 113 Oren 1989; Braun and van den Brink 1998; Porat and Goren 2002; Hartung 2002.
- 114 Wengrow 2006; Yekutieli 2006.
- 115 Andelkovic 1995; Levy and van den Brink 2002; de Miroschedji 2002; Yekutieli 2008; Atkins 2017.
- 116 De Miroschedji and Sadeq 2000; 2005.
- 117 Gophna 1995.
- 118 Levy et al. 1997; 2001.
- 119 Van den Brink 2002; van den Brink and Braun 2002.
- 120 Yeivin 1960; 1963; Brandl 1989; Cialowicz et al. 2016
- 121 Amiran 1974; O. Ilan 2002.
- 122 Keinan 2007; 2013, to which Yekutieli (2008) has added his observations concerning the intentional, politically motivated, defacement
- 123 Loud 1948: pl. 283:1.
- 124 Hestrin and Tadmor 1963; Tadmor 2002.
- 125 Hestrin and Tadmor 1963.
- 126 Yadin 1955; 1963.
- 127 Yeivin 1960; 1963.
- 128 Ben-Tor 1982.
- 129 Watrin 2000; Levy and van den Brink 2002; Miroschedji (2002) proposes a similar sequence, yet considers the middle phase to already have the characteristics of an Egyptian colony in SW Canaan.
- 130 Braun 2002; Kansa and Levy 2002; Atkins 2017.
- 131 E.g., Yekutieli 2008.
- 132 Braun 2002; Kansa and Levy 2002; Atkins 2017.
- 133 Greenberg 2003.

CHAPTER 3

URBANISM AND ITS DEMISE IN THE EARLY BRONZE II AND III

INTRODUCTION

Early Bronze II, to which the first part of this chapter is devoted, was a brief, tumultuous phase during which central traits of Near Eastern urbanism were adopted across the southern Levant. They include including aggregation in fortified centers, evidence for corporate forms of governance and communal action, the creation of standardized commodities and the concentration of staple goods – all reflecting the social discipline and simplification of material culture that accompanied urban life. The initial urbanizing phase was short-lived, soon giving way to a poorly integrated Early Bronze Age III, described in the second part of the chapter. Sites of the latter period are typically massively fortified and sometimes exhibit evidence of hierarchical social structure, with carefully planned palace and temple complexes and evidence for extensive feasting. With few sites between them, the relatively isolated fortified citadel-towns led a precarious existence: some appear to have survived only briefly, while others saw several stages of reconstruction. This quasi-urban landscape survived until the middle of the third millennium (with the exception of Byblos and other Lebanese ports, which continued to thrive). It was into this fragmented political landscape that one of the most significant recorded instances of overland Bronze Age migration was introduced: the Khirbet Kerak culture, a south Levantine manifestation of the Kura–Araxes cultural tradition. New research on the ceramic and lithic technologies, on diet and on resource acquisition compares migrant and local populations, revealing the intricacies of maintaining a diasporic ethnic community in urban and non-urban settings of the Levant. The chapter ends with the final demise of EB III towns, which, rather than an expression of organizational collapse, as has often been suggested, can now be viewed as a drawn-out process of economic reorientation and the reassertion of kinship structures that had been dismantled or suppressed during the first half of the millennium.

CORPORATE URBANISM IN THE EB II

The EB I–II transition is a fascinating one, as it designates a clearly demarcated episode of deep structural (but not cultural) change. After, or – as is more likely – in conjunction with, the mass abandonment of villages, beginning at about 3100 BCE, a completely new settlement network came into existence, whether on the ruins of EB I habitation or on previously unoccupied sites (Figure 3.1). This network rested on four elements: the external appearance of the settlement as a permanent, fortified, entity separated from its surroundings (“standing on its mound” [Josh. 11:13]); the internal layout of the settlement as a community integrating multiple lineages or clans and imposing order upon itself; the establishment of supra-local, specialized industries and of a distribution network for the commodities that they produced; and the abolition of cemeteries. This social transformation, usually termed “urbanization,” even though the cities or towns in question lacked many attributes of urban settlement (particularly those connected with administration and crafts), presents itself as a prototype for all future social transformations in the Levant. Whatever can be gathered about this transformation has implications for later episodes of urbanization and political change.

Because the material and detailed chronological definition of EB II is relatively recent, it is absent in a considerable part of the survey literature on the EBA, where the term “EB II–III” is common. This is also the case for many field surveys that have lumped the two periods together, obscuring important changes in the settlement pattern between them. Where the distinction has been made, however, the results are striking, establishing the EB II as a period characterized by a brief but remarkably extensive boom in settlement across a spectrum ranging from large fortified towns to small fortified and unfortified villages. I will therefore begin with a review of the radiocarbon chronology, followed by a survey of the principal regions and patterns of settlement.

Chronology

The absolute chronology of the EB II has been clarified by radiocarbon-dated stratigraphic sequences and strong synchronisms with Egypt. Radiocarbon sequences that straddle the EB I–III periods have been modeled at single sites with a complete sequence (e.g., Tel Yarmuth, Tel Bet Yerah), or by combining sequences from sites with incomplete sequences (e.g., Arad, Bareqet, Pella and Megiddo).¹ The Bet Yerah sequence points to an early start for EB II at this site, around or shortly after 3100 BCE, and to an end in the first half of the twenty-ninth century BCE, i.e., before 2850. The Megiddo sequence sandwiches a stratigraphic and ceramic gap (representing the absent EB II) between a very late EB I, c. 3000/2950 BCE, and an EB III that begins

about 2820 BCE. The Tel Yarmuth sequence offers a similarly brief EB II, between c. 3000 and c. 2900 BCE, whereas the Arad sequence points to a duration of no more than 150 years (and probably less) for the two main EB II phases at the site (Strata III and II), i.e., c. 3050–2900 BCE; if we allow a couple of decades for the Stratum I occupation, also ascribed to EB II, then the end of the period will coincide with the date indicated at Tel Bet Yerah, in the first half of the twenty-ninth century. Eastern Jordan Valley sites such as Pella and Tell Abu al-Kharaz, which have been less rigorously modeled, provide ranges that are entirely consistent with those from the west. An apparent overlap of radiometric dates of late EB I (e.g., Bet Shean and Megiddo) with those of early EB II (e.g., Bet Yerah or Tel Bareqet) offers the possibility that some EB II sites might have been inhabited before the last EB I villages were abandoned.

Robust synchronisms with First Dynasty kings place the Levantine EB II in a firm regional context. Ceramic containers from the southern Levant have been securely identified in First Dynasty royal tombs. They first appear in the reign of Djer, reach their zenith in the reign of Den, and disappear with the start of the Second Dynasty.² Concomitantly, a number of Egyptian artifacts discovered in Levantine EB II contexts suggest reciprocity, including two objects from Tel Bet Yerah that are particularly evocative: a locally made jug bearing a hieroglyphic graffito, to be read as a name of a place or person, and a fragment of a palette or bowl bearing, in fine relief, the image of a hand grasping a staff and an archaic *'ankh* symbol (Figure 3.2).³ Radiocarbon dates from royal Egyptian tombs point to a maximum duration of about 200 years for the First Dynasty, from about 3070 to 2880 BCE, virtually congruent with the EB II dates in the Levant.⁴ Second Dynasty contexts at Helwan in Egypt have been shown to contain imported pottery from the northern Levant, closely paralleled in early EB III Tell Arqa.⁵

Settlement Pattern

The chronology presented above indicates that the abandonment of EB I villages and the construction of EB II settlements – either on recently abandoned sites or on fresh (or long-abandoned) ground – in the final century of the fourth millennium were concurrent, complementary processes: people left their villages to establish new settlements on fresh ground, then returned to some of the previously occupied sites and renewed settlement there. Village abandonment also led to the desertion of many cemeteries that had been established near the villages, and even where sites were resettled, EB II marks a decline in the use of nearby burial grounds. There was a significant shift in the settlement pattern: where EB I settlement had been dense, as in the Jordan and Jezreel Valleys or the central and southern coastal plains, sites built on alluvial fans or on the valley bottom were vacated and settlement concentrated on slopes and hilltops overlooking agricultural land, whether in valleys and



Figure 3.1 Map of sites mentioned in this chapter.

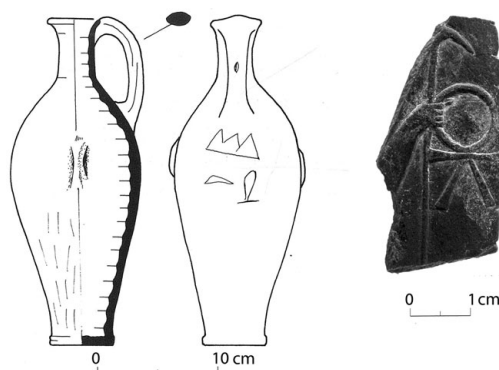


Figure 3.2 Tel Bet Yerah: a locally manufactured ceramic jug featuring a group of Egyptian signs incised after firing (left), and a fragment of an Egyptian relief-decorated siltstone palette or bowl (right). Photo by P. Shrago. Tel Bet Yerah Archaeological Project.

wadi flood-plains for cereals or on moderate slopes for vini- or oleiculture. In other regions, including those that had been virtually empty in late EB I – the Golan, Upper Galilee and the Hula Valley – numerous sites were newly built on hilltops, implying a trend toward intensive cultivation of agricultural land below them. The evidence for EB II settlement, presented below, comes from all regions of the Levant, but the main centers of settlement are concentrated in a band across the Galilee and upper Jordan Valley, along the eastern margins of the coastal plain, and in the Negev desert.

Evidence for EB II settlement is weak along the Lebanese coast. At Byblos, pivotal for interpreting the interface between the Levant and Egypt, EB II settlement is virtually impossible to isolate (see Saghieh 1983, Phase KI), while at other sites, such as Tyre, Tell Arqa and Tell Fadous-Kfarabida, relevant levels have been excavated only in limited soundings.⁶ Moving toward the east and south, however, a robust settlement network, marked by the ubiquity and frequency of South Levantine Metallic ware,⁷ extends from southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria to the western Galilee and Jezreel Valley. This includes the southern Bīqā‘, where more than seventy sites were identified by Marfoe as belonging to “EB II-III,” and southwest Syria, where surveys indicate the presence of one large fortified town at Labwe, serving as a regional center for a several villages and for semi-sedentary pastoralists.⁸ In the northern Jordan Valley, the Galilee and Golan, only sparsely occupied in late EB I, there was a veritable explosion of settlement, with nearly 100 sites recorded in surveys,⁹ and with the following major sites excavated: Tel Dan (Tell el-Qadi) and Tel Hazor in the Hula Valley, Qiryat Ata in the western Galilee, Lawiyeh (Leviah) enclosure in the Golan, Kh. ez-Zeraqun on the Irbid plateau of Transjordan. The sites in these regions, including some of the smallest ones (at about 2 hectares), were fortified.

The Jezreel and Bet Shean Valleys are also included in the northern zone of EB II settlement, but although robust, EB II settlement in these regions shows a marked decline in the number of settled sites and in settled area, in comparison with EB I, from 41 (EB IA and B) to 16 sites and from more than 100 to about 30 settled hectares in the western valley, and from 48 to 15 sites in the eastern valley and adjacent foothills – though we must keep in mind that the EB I pattern represents a duration at least double that of the EB II.¹⁰ Tel Qashish and Tell Ta'anek (Ta'anakh) in the Jezreel Valley, and Tel Bet Yerah and Tell Abu al-Kharaz in the Jordan Valley, are the principal excavated sites. In the more southerly regions of the coastal plain, central highlands and Transjordanian plateau, there was a decline in the number of settled sites but stability in the total settled area, through an apparent process of synoecism. This has been indicated by Gophna for the coastal plain; by Savage, Harrison and Falconer for the Transjordanian plateau (though obscured by absence of EB II–III differentiation); and by the central hill-country surveys.¹¹ Major excavated sites include Tell es-Sa'idiya, Tel el-Far'ah (North), 'Ai and Jericho along the Jordan valley; Tel Yarmuth in the central foothills; and Tel Afeq, Tel Bareqet and Tel Dalit in the west.

In the southwest coastal plain, Egyptian settlements were abandoned in a seemingly deliberate manner and most of the adjacent local Levantine settlements were vacated as well. This was partly offset by settlement expansion in neighboring parts of the Negev, with scores of small semisedentary "Late Timnian" sites recorded in the Negev Highlands, and a remarkable group of villages in a highland enclave in southern Sinai.¹² Many of the Negev sites, as well as the Sinai enclave, are associated through their architecture and material culture with the gateway site of Arad, in the northern Negev. Bab edh-Dhra', east of the Dead Sea, might have served a similar function in relation to sites of southern Transjordan and the Arabah Valley.¹³

Data on the agricultural economy of EB towns are sketchy. While it is clear that the fundamentals of the EB I Mediterranean economy remained central in the transformed settlement map of EB II, the concentration of settlement in towns in areas such as the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys may have caused pressure on adjacent cultivated land, due to the abandonment of more distant areas previously farmed by dispersed villages, necessitating new regulatory mechanisms and institutions. This could also explain the colonization of areas like the Hula Valley, where pressure on land resources in the proximity of established towns might have encouraged the expansion of farmlands and settlement. Such colonization – that is, the rapid construction of fortified, densely settled villages and towns – could have created an increased demand for commodities and the development of specialized niche resources, leading to increasing volumes of interregional trade.

A preliminary study of agricultural plant remains at Bet Yerah (Period C) indicated that the grain, mainly wheat, used in the homes had been processed

and possibly stored elsewhere, as weeds and chaff were relatively rare; this is in contrast to the EB I, where the ubiquity of weeds and chaff suggested that some initial crop processing took place within the domestic compounds. The grain recovered at Tell Abu al-Kharaz appears to tell the same story.¹⁴ The excavators at Qiryat Ata deduced the existence of central grain storage from the relative dearth of storage vessels or bins in the EB II houses there, in comparison with EB I.¹⁵ Likewise, zooarchaeological studies indicate a supply of meat to the sites from offsite pastoralists, but not the industrial-scale herd management seen at full-fledged urban sites of the ancient Near East.¹⁶ Remains of animals employed for traction (cattle and donkeys) have been found at every site studied. This leaves little doubt that town-dwellers were actively engaged in agricultural and probably pastoral pursuits. The corporate framework that allowed planning and cooperative building endeavors would doubtless have allowed for the coordination of agricultural activity – pooling of resources when necessary or support for specialized cultivation and delayed returns (as in olei- and viticulture). But as things stand, our knowledge of the relations between farmers, herders and mobile populations who must have been present, and of the volume of trade in agricultural goods, remains rather nebulous.

There has been some conjecture regarding the possible impact of climate change on settlement and social change in the EB II and III.¹⁷ It is suggested that the early third millennium was relatively moist, and that soon afterward a gradual desiccation set in, becoming increasingly severe toward the end of the millennium. The moist conditions would, according to this scenario, have effectively prevented settlement along the marshy troughs hugging the coastal plain. While such changes could well have triggered changes in settlement and subsistence strategies, in the composition of crops or the disposition of herds, the chronological resolution of the climate studies – which do not speak in one voice (see Chapter 1) – falls far short of that produced by excavations, so that a precise match between them is elusive. The following discussion therefore takes as its premise that communities of the Levant responded to climatic shifts and variations as best they could, but that such shifts could be accommodated by local adjustments (such as a shift eastward within the coastal plain), never reaching a magnitude that would have required the abandonment of broad regions.

Planning and Architecture at Major EB II Sites

More than any other period reviewed in this volume, the Levantine EB II is a period of short duration and considerable interregional uniformity: its primary features – fortifications, household and settlement layout, industries and representational art – are repeated at many sites and undergo little change during the 100–150 years of their existence. The following review is therefore

arranged topically, beginning with the built environment and then moving on to crafts and trade.

Fortifications and the organization of built space define EB II walled sites. Viewed from this perspective, they run the gamut from simple to complex, with basic fortification and minimal interior organization at one end of the spectrum, and sophisticated fortification and structured internal layouts at the other. There is a rough correlation between the size of the settlements and the degree of planning that they reveal. Smaller sites, 2–4 hectares in extent, which can be estimated to have housed several hundred inhabitants, show little communal intrusion into the household sphere, whereas settlements of 15–30 hectares, with populations numbering in the thousands, exhibit greater evidence for urban concepts of order, concepts that would have restricted the freedom of each household to design its built environment. The rough population figures cited above are reminiscent of demographic thresholds that have been determined as significant for communication and decision-making. The smaller sites are near the upper limit for face-to-face interaction and mutual surveillance, set at about 500 persons, whereas the 2,500-person threshold, crossed by the largest sites, is often cited as the point beyond which human groups require the creation of representative coordinating bodies or hierarchical institutions.¹⁸ The gap between them is presumably a gray area, where institutions may or may not be required.

Fortifications. Many settlements, small and large, were first surrounded by walls in the EB II. In their simplest form, these were mudbrick walls on stone foundations, about 2.5 meters wide and possibly not much higher. The walls were built in segments, sometimes quite long and uniform, and sometimes short; often, a narrow gap would be left between the segments, allowing access through the wall. These passages were often blocked – though perhaps not right away – by semicircular or rectangular construction built up against the outer face of the wall (such structures are usually identified as towers). In some places, true gates were constructed – passages, 2–3 meters wide, protected by towers that emerge from the wall itself. Segmented wall construction, as well as the large number of passages through the wall and their random positioning, suggest a tension – played out in the fortification – between the individual preference for unrestricted movement and access to fields and herds outside the walls, and the communal interest in self-demarcation as an enclosed settlement and the protection of houses and property. The lack of uniformity in wall construction seen at some sites suggests that each section was built by the inhabitants of the adjacent ward.

Walls sharing all or most of the characteristics described above occur throughout the southern Levant, for example, at Tel Me'ona in the western Galilee, Kh. ez-Zeraqun in the northeast plateau, Tell el-Qasis (Tel Qashish) in the Jezreel Valley, Arad in the south or Tel Dalit and Tel Bareqet in the east-central coastal plains.¹⁹

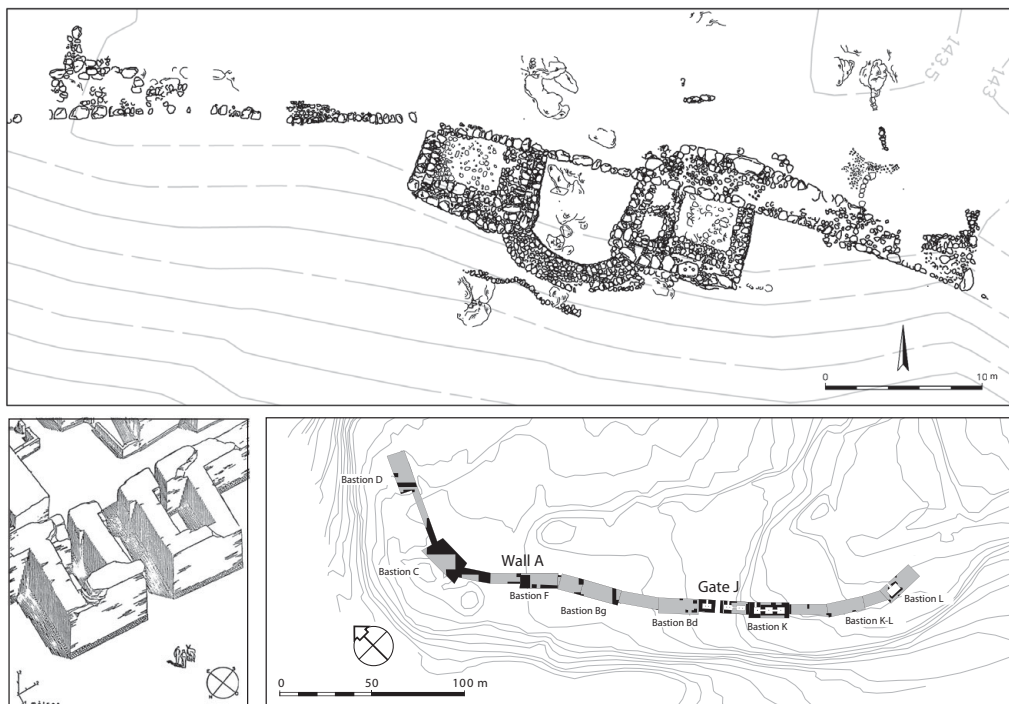


Figure 3.3 EB II fortifications and gates: top, the south gate and town wall at Tel Bareqet (courtesy of S. Paz and Y. Paz); bottom left, reconstructed gate of Tell el-Far'ah (North) (after De Vaux 1962: fig. 1); bottom right, the EB II fortifications at Tel Yarmuth (courtesy of P. de Miroschedji). Reproduced by permission.

A number of sites show increased planning effort in the design of gates or of the entire fortification (Figures 3.3 and 3.4). At Tel Bareqet and Tell el-Far'ah (North), paved, direct-entry gates were flanked by massive towers that may have stood several stories high.²⁰ The wall at Tell el-Far'ah underwent several stages of amplification, during which a number of narrow passages through the wall were blocked, so that eventually all movement in and out of the town (or at least the excavated part of it) was channeled through the single, fortified gate. At Tel Bet Yerah, a stout triple mudbrick wall (with no posterns) was built across the base of the small peninsula upon which the site was located. At least one direct-entry gate pierced this wall, near the southeast corner of the mound, consisting of a stone-paved and stone-lined passage. Abutting the external right doorpost was a large, anchor-shaped basalt stela fronted by three hewn basalt blocks that appear to be offering-tables. Inside the town, a 2.5-meter-wide mudbrick wall appears to have set the acropolis apart from the rest of the town.²¹

By far the most complex fortification is that uncovered over decades of excavations at Tel Yarmuth. Pierre de Miroschedji describes a carefully planned system, comprising a stout stone wall built in solid 6-meter-wide

segments alternating with 8-meter-wide casemate-like construction consisting of one to three rooms built along the central axis of fortification.²² A massive trapezoidal bastion was built at the southwest angle of the fortification. This wall was initially furnished with a plain, direct-entry gate, but in a late phase of the Early Bronze II, a massive terrace wall – preserved to a height of 8 meters – was added in front of the existing wall and a new, indirect gate and ramp had to be built to navigate the passage through the outer wall and the intervening 20-meter-wide fill, and over the top of the inner wall.

At all sites, the construction of fortifications was coordinated with domestic construction: the walls do not cut or intrude upon houses, while houses are often built parallel to the wall, at some distance from it. This suggests that the walls were a fundamental component of urbanizing sites: towns were built from the outside in.

Town Structure. All EB II towns reveal some degree of internal organization, with streets and alleys defining house clusters, but there is little clarity over the degree of functional zoning that might be encountered within such towns. Such differentiation – whether of markets, craft precincts or ritual areas – is often viewed as a measure of urbanization: the more it is in evidence, the greater the degree of systemic integration; but there is an inherent ambiguity in EB II settlements that has produced a veritable Rashomon effect of widely divergent interpretations. The excavators of Arad, for example (Figure 3.4), identified an orderly layout of concentric and radial streets, a temple precinct, a palace precinct, and a municipal reservoir (a depression receiving runoff from house roofs and streets) surrounded by administrative structures and market squares. The remaining parts of the town consisted of dwelling compounds based on the “Arad House” – a bench-lined rectilinear broad-room hall, often equipped with one or two roof posts, abutted by a courtyard and additional, smaller chambers.²³ The same compilation of structures has been viewed by others in a completely different light: the arrangement of compounds and alleys haphazard, the “temples” and “palace” as no more than prosperous households. The whole has been described as little more than a kind of a congealed semi-nomadic encampment.²⁴ Granted the excavators’ description is optimistic, there are a few peculiar components of this EB II settlement that may nonetheless be ascribed to a Levantine brand of urbanism:

1. The general concept of a fortified place, clearly set apart from the countryside, and often capturing a large population
2. Evidence for zoning, which discerns between the perimeter (wall, gates and adjacent plazas), the outer belt of domestic structures and a central core (“prosperous compounds” or “palaces/temples” and the water-reservoir precinct)
3. The canonization of the Arad house plan: this is an original EB II innovation, reproduced not only within the town but in a series of related sites

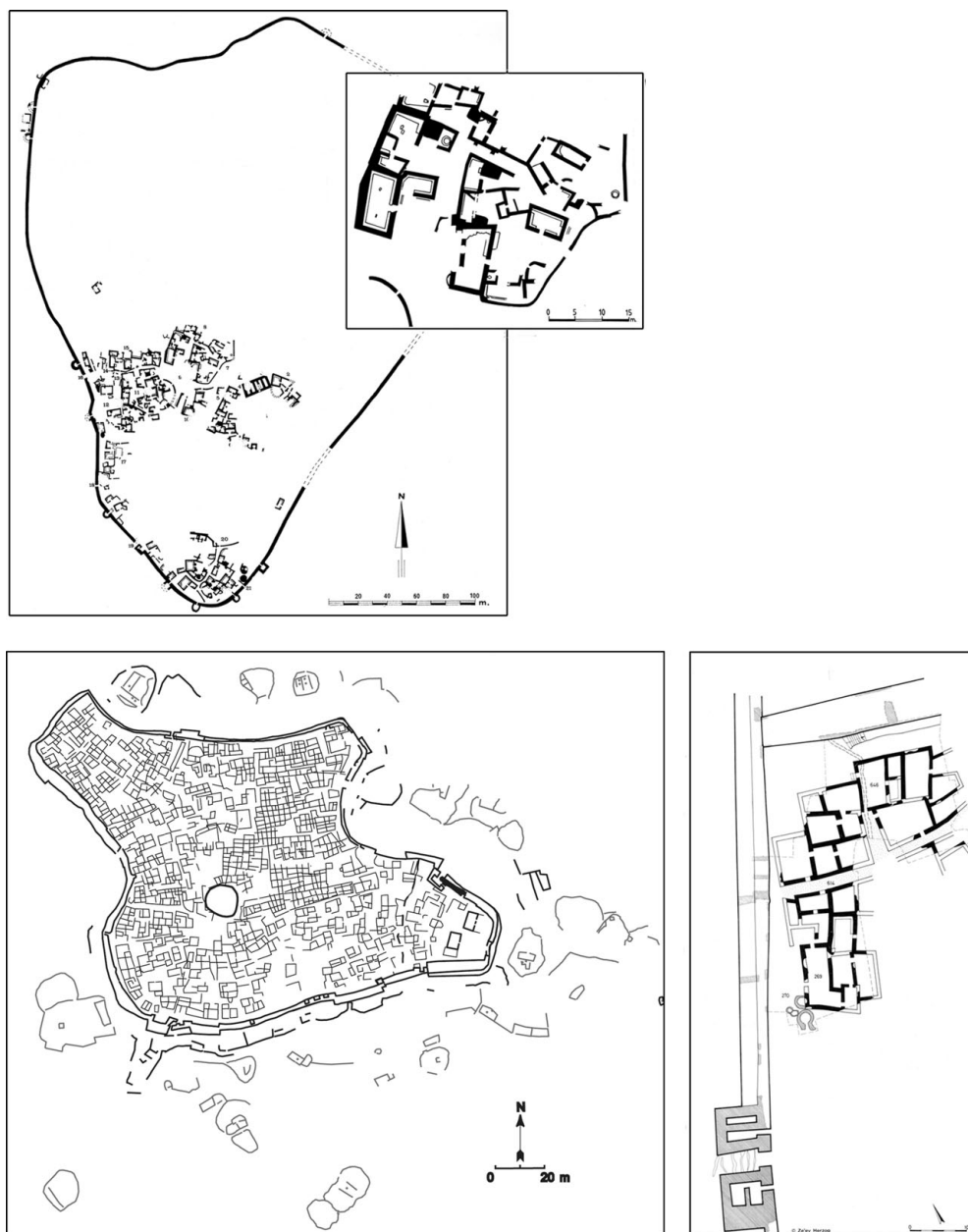


Figure 3.4 General plans of Arad (top, inset – temple precinct, after Amiran and Ilan 1992: figs. 21, 82), Labwe (bottom left, courtesy of F. Braemer) and Tell el-Far'ah (North) (bottom right, after Herzog 1997: fig. 3.13). Reproduced by permission.

scattered across the Negev and Sinai that maintained trade contacts with Arad. The Arad house, or its iteration as a temple, was also reproduced in the form of a terracotta model, with a flat roof, raised corners, and wooden doorposts (see Figure 3.6, below).

4. The creation of added value through raw material processing and crafts (ceramic, textiles, stone beads and seals), or through trade: Arad served as an intermediary in the distribution of Dead Sea bitumen and Feinan copper, both of which may have found their way to Egypt.²⁵ In light of these functions and its Negev and Sinai connections, the identification of market-places within the town is plausible.

Limited evidence for planning and low functional differentiation appears to characterize many EB II settlements, including middling sites like Tel Bareqet and small sites like Tel Qashish. These would have been, effectively, walled agricultural settlements, with a limited role in trade or industry (although all participated in the interregional trade system, as will be shown below). But alongside those sites, there were towns that demonstrate the existence of a more resolute guiding hand, imposing spatial order on their inhabitants. The outstanding examples of this type of settlement, described below, are to be seen at Tell el-Far'ah, where a large residential area was excavated adjacent to the town wall, and Tel Bet Yerah, where extensive excavations recovered traces of town planning throughout the 30-hectare site. Representing the intermediate part of the urbanizing spectrum is the 4.5-hectare site of Qiryat Ata, widely sampled due to extensive salvage work.

Two main phases of construction are attributed to the EB II at Tell el-Far'ah North.²⁶ Both show a high degree of order in the settlement layout: streets – some of them cobbled – were laid out along the wall and in an orthogonal grid, demarcating domestic clusters. Pillar bases are common in the earlier phase. Within the domestic compounds, which were arranged around courtyards, it is difficult to distinguish between individual houses. In the second phase, multiroomed houses can be more clearly defined, possibly reflecting clearer demarcation of nuclear households.

A similar trajectory has been suggested for Bet Yerah, where most excavation fields showed two main construction phases.²⁷ Parts of ten streets – many of them stone-paved – were uncovered in various parts of the site, as well as a large public plaza. A major artery runs north from the gate (Figure 3.5); it is met by a paved east–west street that ran parallel to the town wall. The other street segments, including a 40-meter-long section near the town acropolis – are also aligned north–south/east–west. The long, paved street near the acropolis ends in a 500-square-meter plaza, abutting a broad internal boundary wall. It thus appears that the town was divided into different wards that adhered to a fixed orientation. The gate excavated at the southeast corner of the town would most likely not have been the only entrance, so additional streets may be posited extending north from the town wall.

A vivid illustration of the gradual implementation of urban concepts of order was observed in an area situated a short distance north and west of the gate: an early EB II compound, composed of two pillared halls and attached



Figure 3.5 A paved street in the south part of Tel Bet Yerah, flanked by houses (Bar-Adon excavations of 1951). Israel Antiquities Authority archives.

habitation rooms, was at first surrounded by open space. Later in EB II, the compound was bisected by a north–south alleyway and broken up into several multiroomed units that filled the unoccupied space on either side of the alley. These changes, which combined construction for public benefit (the alley) with the reorganization of domestic space, appear to catch the imposition of a new order in mid-flight, as it were, reflecting a rapid evolution of urbanism *after* the foundation of the fortified settlement. Although EB II public buildings have yet to be identified at Bet Yerah, the plaza and the internal acropolis wall noted above illustrate the coordination of the street system with public spaces (markets or ceremonial plazas).

Qiryat Ata shows a typical sequence for the northern valleys: new EB II construction and circumvallation on the site of an EB I village.²⁸ The new domestic units are rectilinear, multiroomed houses – some with pillared broad rooms. There is a fenced area within the site, but it is largely unexcavated. The abundant contents of the excavated houses are characterized by a preponderance of food preparation and consumption vessels, and a relative dearth of storage vessels. This has been interpreted as evidence for centralized on-site storage at an unspecified location. No clear street system was observed at the site, but most houses were oriented to the cardinal points, as at Bet Yerah.

As in the case of the fortifications, EB II urban structure comprised certain fundamental components that could be interpreted and elaborated by each community. This created a spectrum of possibilities ranging from what were effectively fortified villages, where elements of extramural life could be preserved, to the town proper, which was – at least in parts – subjected to new

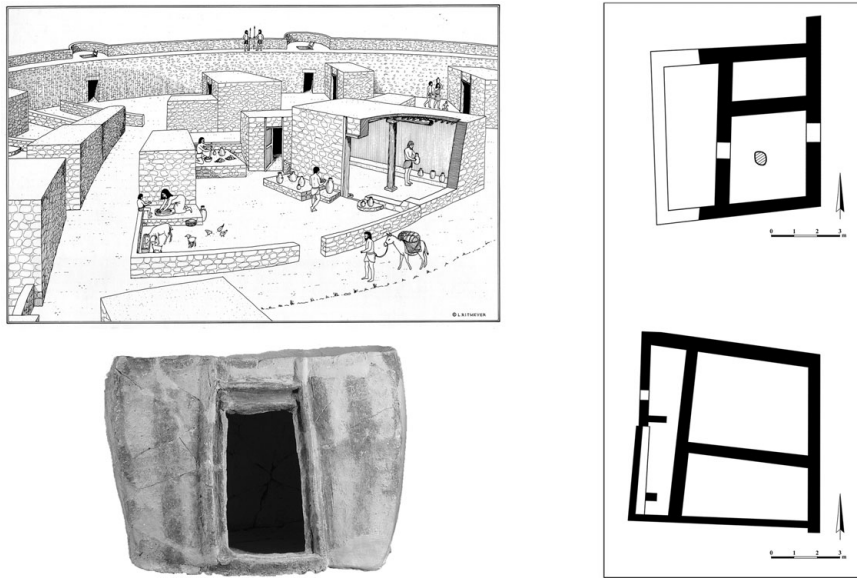


Figure 3.6 Left, reconstructed house compound at Arad (drawn by L. Ritmeyer, Amiran and Ilan 1992: fig. 31) and model house or temple from Arad (photo by M. Salzberger, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority); right, house plans at Tel Bet Yerah (Tel Bet Yerah Archaeological Project).

rules of urban order, in which previous modes of spatial organization (such as extensive family compounds) were submerged. Since we cannot point to planning institutions of any administrative or economic stature (a point that will be expanded upon below), it must be assumed that each community found other, consensual ways to generate participation in the implementation of the guiding principles.²⁹ One of the palpable results was the absence of architectural differentiation in the towns: buildings that stand out in terms of size, quality of construction or architectural elaboration are rare.

Urban Dwelling in EB II. The typical house-compound found at Arad and its desert offshoots comprises one of the most successful domestic templates of the EBA (Figure 3.6). Ornit Ilan, who studied the Arad household, identified several recurring features:³⁰

1. There is one main room, one or two auxiliary rooms and an enclosed courtyard.
2. Each room is accessed from the courtyard (i.e., not from the adjacent room).
3. The rooms are broad rooms; the main room, the floor of which is usually somewhat lower than that of the courtyard, is furnished with benches built along its walls, a door-socket to the left of the entrance, and one or two roof supports.

4. The main room houses cooking installations (usually in the middle of the room) and storage bins (usually to the left of the entrance).
5. House walls were plastered, and, judging by a terracotta house (or temple) model found at Arad, roofs were flat with raised edges.

This domestic template was flexible, allowing for the creation of small, middle-sized and large compounds within the town – in accordance with the size or wealth of the family they housed. The excavators at Arad note a gradual diminution in compound sizes from earlier to later strata, perhaps indicating constraints associated with increasing density of settlement. Domestic inventories included evidence for household crafts (such as spinning, weaving, sewing and leatherworking) and especially for storage, preparation and consumption of foodstuffs in ceramic containers. The ceramics comprised, in approximately equal proportions, cooking and mixing vessels, long-term storage vessels (jars and pithoi) and short-term storage vessels (jugs, juglets and amphoriskoi), together accounting for about 90 percent of the assemblage. Vessels for personal consumption (cups and bowls) and lamps were found relatively infrequently at Arad.

In the central hills and plains, domestic compounds appear to accommodate individual components of the Arad compound – central broad rooms, courtyards and occasional benches – without maintaining the concept as a whole. At Tel Bareqet, houses were adapted to the topography, street plan or individual household needs, while maintaining the basic role of the compound as a multifunctional living, work and storage space for a nuclear family.³¹

In the more northerly regions the Arad compound is no longer in evidence. The EB I village compound, based on an oval or subrectangular pillared broad room surrounded by open activity areas, had given way, in the late EB I megavillages, to walled courtyard compounds. In EB II, as intramural settlement density increased, and as rules of urban organization took root, the multifunctional compound was gradually replaced by the multiroomed square or rectangular house with its comparatively complicated access syntax (Figure 3.6). The reduction in size of courtyards and habitation rooms, as construction grew denser and as open spaces within settlements disappeared, allowed fewer functions to be fulfilled by the domestic units. Those that could no longer be accommodated within the houses were pushed beyond the walls or taken over by central institutions (e.g., extra-mural animal pens and central storage complexes). Houses in the sites of the middle and northern parts of the southern Levant thus reveal fewer storage installations, while presentation and personal consumption vessels are far more common, accounting for 25–50 percent of the ceramic assemblage.³²

Public Buildings and Elite Compounds. Apart from the fortifications and streets described above, EB II does not feature too many structures that could be characterized as monumental or of a public nature. At Arad, Strata III and II,

three neighboring compounds were identified as an administrative center connected to the water reservoir, a fenced temple compound with two double temples and their attached courtyards, and an oversized domestic compound that is viewed as a palace.³³ Of these, the most impressive is the “water citadel” – a thick-walled building composed of five long and narrow halls that could have been storerooms. Unfortunately, this building was poorly preserved and provided no finds that could testify to its use. The cultic compound consists of two pairs of broad rooms with their doors facing east (Figure 3.4, inset). Each such pair is adjoined by a spacious courtyard, a square platform and a number of auxiliary rooms. There were no finds that could provide convincing support for the cultic interpretation, prompting the suggestion that the buildings were houses, and the platforms, granary foundations.³⁴ However, as we have already seen in the case of Megiddo (where the cultic interpretation has not been challenged), Levantine EBA cult was not predicated on ritual elaboration, religious iconography or cult paraphernalia, nor on the existence of a priestly class or of important economic functions.

The finds from one of the supposed temples, which included imported vessels from the north (a Metallic ware platter) and from Egypt, as well as a decorated local jar, might be seen as a cache of prestige objects (votives? gifts?).³⁵ A stone slab found nearby bears a simple incised design of an upright figure with a head shaped like an ear of grain (or perhaps a hairstyle is intended?), raised hands and bare feet with the toes clearly shown and, behind it, a similar figure lying prone on a frame. The dominant attributes of both figures are their outstretched palms, in an attitude of prayer or lamentation. Ruth Amiran interpreted this object as a cult stela that depicts, sequentially, the death and resurrection of Dumuzi-of-the-Grain, as a symbol of the changing seasons and the fertility of the field. Miroschedji, following Schroer and Keel, views the scene as an expression of the male and female partners in the sacred marriage of Dumuzi and Inanna.³⁶ In light of these finds it does not seem too far-fetched to assign the Arad compounds a function in ceremonial, seasonal gatherings of the inhabitants of the town.

The palace is a walled compound, in the middle of which lies a large broad room surrounded by auxiliary chambers and courts. At its perimeter are additional broad rooms in the “Arad House” style. The abundance of finds in this compound – which include a large number of craft-related artifacts – and its sheer size, which is significantly greater than that of the largest houses in the settlement, earned the compound the epithet of “palace” – or at least of the household of the leading family of Arad.

Incidental evidence for communal life in Arad includes dozens of stone playing boards found scattered throughout the site.³⁷ Each board was incised or dimpled with a 3×10 arrangement of squares or hollows (or with some variation of that arrangement). Playing boards could be portable, but many

were on fixed paving slabs in streets or in public squares. In view of the adoption of the playing board, under the name of *senet*, by Egyptian elite culture, leading even to its eventual inclusion in the Book of the Dead, a ceremonial aspect for the game in its Levantine, EB II context should not be ruled out, whether in Arad or beyond it (similar boards are reported at Bab edh-Dhra' and Bet Yerah).

Structures styled as “palaces” have been identified at a few more sites, such as Tell es-Sa'idiya in the Jordan Valley and Khirbet ez-Zeraqun.³⁸ As at Arad, these are multiroomed compounds, rich in everyday finds, that are not superior – in terms of construction or quality of finds – to the houses nearby. If these were buildings of the elite, it was an elite distinguished only by the size of the household. No temples outside Arad are securely ascribed to the EB II.

Material Culture: The Evidence for the Commodification and Distribution of Craft Products and Agricultural Goods

The fundamental uniformity in outlook disclosed in Levantine public and domestic architecture is matched by a strong tendency toward simplicity and absence of variety in the material culture, which resulted in a remarkable degree of standardization over most of the Levant. The following discussion focuses on the ceramic industries, which have been thoroughly investigated and may be taken to represent processes that affected other crafts – such as metalworking and ground stone.

Large ceramic workshop industries characterized different parts of the region. They have been studied in detail in the northern Levant (Metallic ware and Golan cooking ware) and in the south (industries of Arad and its dependencies), and it is likely that they existed in the central regions as well.³⁹ The workshops were established near favored raw-material sources and specialized in the production of set assemblages of high quality. This pattern, in which ceramic raw material is viewed as a unique, valued resource, was uncharacteristic of everyday EB I ceramics and seen only in “niche” products like the Gray Burnished ware bowls of eastern Samaria (see Chapter 2). The transition to industrial production at a small number of centers and widespread distribution from those centers (at the expense of small-scale local producers) marks a strategic shift with widespread implications. It required producers to subscribe to a concept of distribution that transcended the local community: a monopolistic market approach, in which commodities were offered to people who were neither friends, family or neighbors, under the assumption that they had few alternatives and that the products would be exchanged for goods of equal value. On the part of the consumers, it necessitated faith in the “brand”: an a priori assumption that the product will successfully fill its role (through prior acquaintance with its



Figure 3.7 Left, map showing Lower Cretaceous outcrops (hatched) in relation to sites with high proportions (at least 50 percent of non-cooking wares) of South Levantine Metallic ware; right, approximate distribution of South Levantine Metallic ware and Golan cooking pots. Drawn by I. Ben-Ezra after Greenberg and Porat 1996; Greenberg 2006.

permanent qualities) and a relinquishing of the option to replace it with a local alternative.

The production center of South Levantine Metallic ware (SLMW) has been localized, mineralogically and on the strength of surface surveys, to the southern slopes of Mount Hermon.⁴⁰ The advantageous properties of the kaolinite-rich clays containing a prominent component of iron oxides found in Lower Cretaceous deposits had likely been discovered earlier in the fourth millennium, since occasional products of a presumed ancestral Levantine Metallic ware workshop appear in late EB IB strata, but it was only in EB II that a cluster of workshops capitalized on the geological feature, whose outcrops can be found along the entire Anti-Lebanon massif of which Mount Hermon is the southernmost peak (Figure 3.7). The Lower Cretaceous clay was used to manufacture thin, durable vessels, highly fired (hence their “metallic” clink), suitable for storage of liquids such as vegetal oils or for use as table ware. The vessels made in the SLMW ateliers (which are probably to be distinguished from northern workshops that must have come into existence in Lebanon at about the same time) fulfill a broad range of functions – storage in jars and pithoi, food preparation in spouted vats and deep bowls, communal and

individual consumption using jugs, mugs and the trademark platters (but never cooking, for which Metallic ware is unsuited) – and maintain a uniform quality, color and appearance wherever they are found (Figure 3.8). Smaller vessels were usually red-slipped and lightly burnished, whereas larger ones were covered with pattern combing – a treatment intended to consolidate the vessel walls and, incidentally perhaps, afford a better grip on them. Only a minute portion of SLMW vessels were decorated; these include small painted jars and pithoi bearing cylinder-seal impressions in a band at the join between the neck and body (see below section on “The Art of Marketing”). Excavated sites, from the Jezreel Valley and Bet Shean Valley northward into the Galilee and Golan, are characterized by very high proportions of SLMW in the EB II assemblage, amounting to 50–80 percent of the non-cooking assemblage (Figure 3.7). Surveyed sites from the same regions show the same trend, so that as many as 150 EB II sites obtained all or most of their pottery from the SLMW ateliers.⁴¹

From the manufacturer’s perspective, the SLMW domestic assemblage broadcasts several clear technical and cultural preferences: uniformity over variety, durability over an attractive surface finish, and shared consumption of solids over convivial drinking. The broad distribution of SLMW shows that these priorities were adopted by many consumers, who could depend on a well-regulated supply system. Thousands of people in scores of sites – including sites as much as 100 kilometers distant from the workshops – were “subscribers” not only to the SLMW “catalog,” as it were, but to the values embedded within it. Moreover, SLMW vessels were sent as gifts to distant places, with platters being shipped to Arad and jugs and jars to First Dynasty tombs in Egypt, where they came to be known as “Abydos ware.”⁴²

In view of the quantitative estimates cited above, the broad dissemination of SLMW in the northern region must have been accompanied by the contraction or disappearance of local ceramic workshops at many sites. In those cases where a local industry can be identified, it presents the same techniques and the same attitude to raw materials as that of its senior relation. Thus, in the southeastern ward of Tel Bet Yerah, remains of a local potter’s establishment were found, accompanied by products that bear a strong external resemblance to SLMW vessels, while being composed of a single clay type, obtained nearby.⁴³

In the southern regions too, Porat, Goren and others have demonstrated that the ceramic assemblages of Arad, the Negev and southern Sinai were produced in a limited number of production centers, each of which utilized a particular clay source and specialized in a limited range of vessels.⁴⁴ Few vessels were produced at the scattered sites, whereas those made in specialist workshops were distributed over a distance of as much as 400 kilometers. The industries identified by Porat and Goren included two workshops specializing in holmouth jars – the most common vessel type at Arad and the south – a

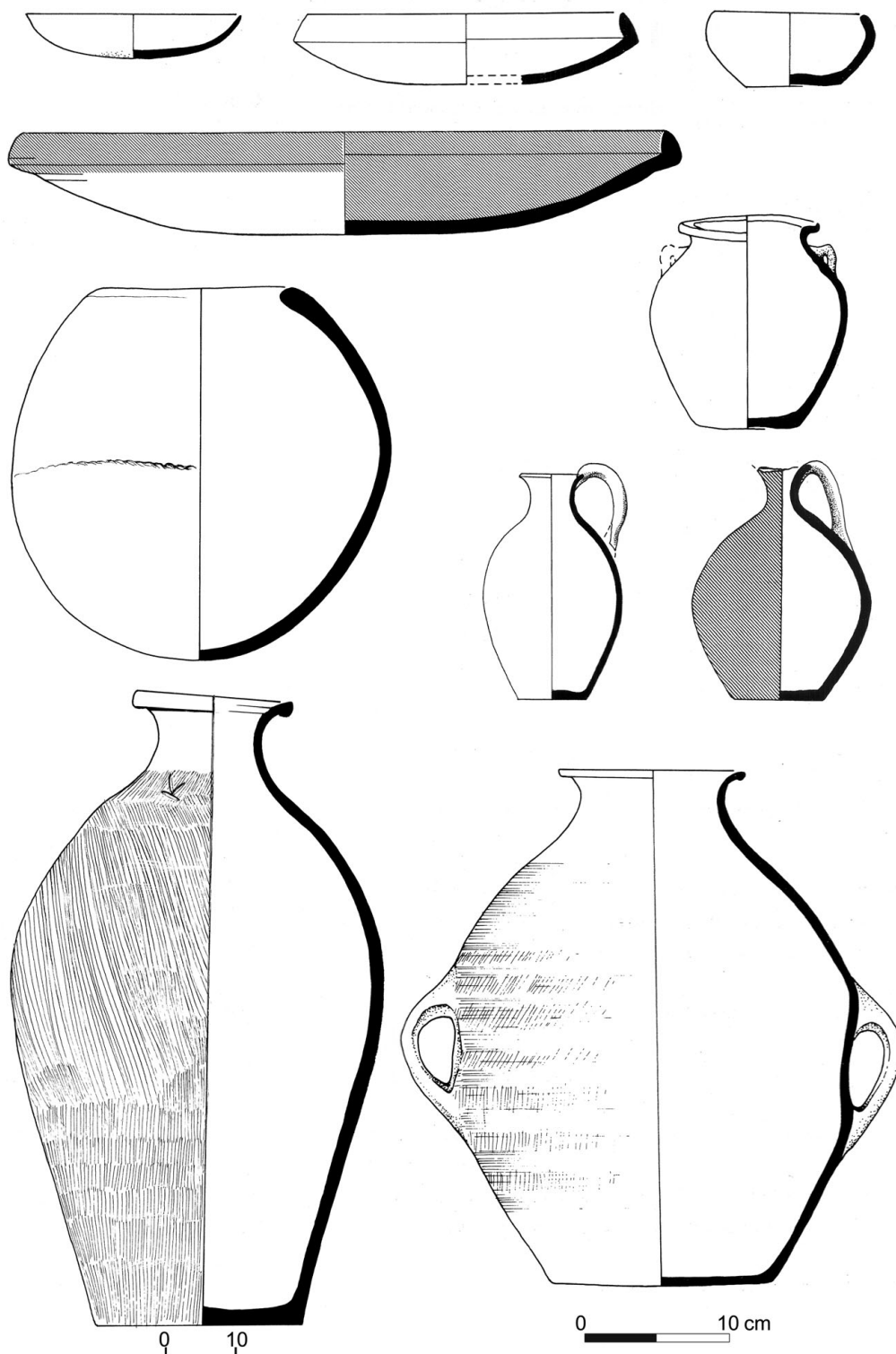


Figure 3.8 Metallic ware types and globular Golan cooking pot (middle row).

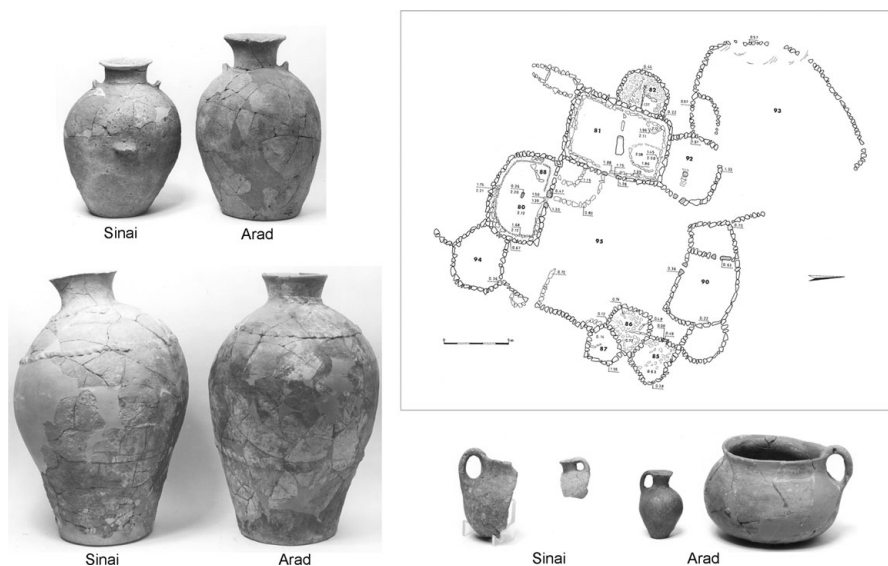


Figure 3.9 Arad-type pottery from southern Sinai compared with vessels from Arad; at right, a house compound from the southern Sinai site of Sheikh ‘Awad (= Beit-Arieh 2003: figs. 2.70, 4.12, 4.13, 4.18). Courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

workshop specializing in round-bottomed cooking pots, and a workshop specializing in bowls, jugs and red-slipped amphoriskoi, which form the bulk of the table vessels at Arad. Morphologically and technologically, the red-slipped vessels at Arad are very similar to those in more northerly regions. The resemblance extends to small stylistic details such as the decorative lug handles that are commonly found on jugs.

Cooking pots from Arad and the other desert sites have arkose sand inclusions, a product of igneous rock formations that occur in the Feinan region and in the southern Arabah and southern Sinai, where “Aradian” sites were discovered and excavated by I. Beit-Arieh (Figure 3.9).⁴⁵ As noted earlier, the northern SLMW assemblage did not include cooking pots (since its clay is not suitable for rapid heating and cooling) and the Metallic ware consumers had to supplement their home assemblage with the products of different specialist workshops. One such industry, specializing in holemouth, round-bottomed pots similar to those of the south, has been identified in the Golan, distributing its products eastward to the Jordan and Jezreel Valleys and the Lower Galilee (Figures 3.7 and 3.8). This industry existed alongside local, site-specific holemouth-pot workshops and even household potters who made small quantities of necked, flat-bottomed vessels.⁴⁶ The presence of virtually identical globular pots throughout the desert regions south of Arad thus mirrors the situation in the north, where an independent cooking-ware workshop exploits advantageous raw materials and distributes its products widely.

The systems of production and distribution just described imply the emergence of a trade network and of markets or nodes where goods could be exchanged, based on shared concepts of value.⁴⁷ We must assume that such networks, extending regionally over an area as small as 2,000 or as large as 20,000 square kilometers, transported additional commodities whose production was also based on the control of scarce resources. This might have been the case with copper ores and tool blanks, transported from Wadi Feinan (and possibly the Sinai as well) to Arad, where they were processed and transferred to sites throughout the southern Levant. The copper tools found at Arad – simple axe and adze blades, awls and chisels – are identical to artifacts found in the central and northern regions.⁴⁸ At the site of Har Haruvim, at the southwestern fringe of the Jezreel Valley, which has been identified as a center of Canaanite blade production, the surface is littered with sherds of Metallic ware and Golan cooking pots.⁴⁹ Canaanite blades were used in EB II (as in EB I) in the manufacture of basic agricultural implements – sickles, threshing boards and reaping knives – as well as for household purposes and in crafts, for example, as ceramic burnishers.⁵⁰ The co-presence at Har Haruvim of imported ceramics and blades destined for export suggests that both types of commodity were part of a single trade network. As the exchange of copper and flint artifacts extends in time back to the EB I, it might be suggested that ceramic exchange piggy-backed on an existing trade infrastructure, while greatly increasing its volume.

Rare *prima facie* evidence for an EB II caravan route comes from a survey conducted by Yekutieli near the southwest Dead Sea shore, at the Zohar ascent. A trail of discarded ceramic fragments, campsites and surveillance points was followed along the ascent and mountain pass linking the lower Dead Sea plain with the Arad plateau, plausibly interpreted as one of the routes serving the distribution of copper out of Feinan.⁵¹ The ceramics picked up along the route included a good number of vessels originating in the northern regions (SLMW in EB II and Khirbet Kerak ware in EB III), revealing the range of the traders of the period. They may be assigned a crucial role in the dissemination of the uniform cultural norms that appear to characterize the period.

Mentioned earlier in passing, hundreds of south Levantine vessels, made in the SLMW workshops and at or near Tel Bet Yerah, made their way to First Dynasty tombs, from the time of Djer to the end of the dynasty.⁵² These imports to Egypt mark a brief phase of trade or, as is more likely, gift exchange with the EB II Levant that was centered on the large EB II towns and industries of the northern Jordan Valley. They were soon to be superseded by the products of the central Levantine workshops obtained on the Lebanese coast (see below section on “The Byblos Enclave”), which would become the canonical trade vessel of the Old Kingdom “Byblos run,”⁵³ but for now, it seems that the coastal Lebanese sites had yet to enter the orbit of Egypt, or if

they did, it was only as way-stations on a trade route still focused on the Jordan Valley.

The Art of Marketing. Two ancillary products associated with the SLMW industry provide further insight on the production/consumption nexus: cylinder seals and zoomorphic figurines. In EB I, cylinder-seal impressions appeared randomly on ceramic vessels, especially on pithoi manufactured in the region of Megiddo. A much larger number of such impressions may be attributed to EB II, nearly all of them impressed around the base of the necks of combed SLMW pithoi.⁵⁴ The positioning of the impressions is not arbitrary, placed as it is at the junction between the separate wheel-made neck and the coil-made body. In this sense, the seal-impression is the mark of the fabricant, intended to brand the vessel – whether as the product of a specific workshop or as a mark of its intended use – and not its content. The repertoire of motifs appearing on the seals comprises the bulk of the iconographic inventory of EB II – perhaps the most artistically challenged subperiod of the Levantine EBA. Where EB I motifs dealt with the tension between humans and natural forces, EB II seal impressions focus on the institutional and ritual control of fertility: a series of impressions depict various facets of a ritual or celebration conducted in built surroundings. They include dancing figures on rooftops, male and female figures in ritual stances before temple façades, ritual copulation, sacred herds and other images that can be related, according to Miroschedji, to different aspects of the “sacred marriage.”⁵⁵ We cannot tell if the glyptic artists witnessed such events or only reproduced motifs they may have seen on objects obtained from neighboring cultures. Geometric seal impressions, executed in a style similar to that of the representational scenes and also impressed on SLMW jars and pithoi, constitute the most common type of EB II impression. The formulaic message and medium (most seals being produced in association with Metallic ware vessels, and representing a very limited range of glyptic artists) reflect the attempt by EB II urbanizers to harmonize social institutions with material culture production in this period. It must, however, be kept in mind that the application of the seals to the pithoi before firing, that is, at their production locales, and the fact that pithoi, once filled, would have remained stationary, together indicate that the seals could not serve as part of a system that monitored the movement of commodities in space; they served mainly to identify the jars and set them apart from others. The difference between this function and that of seals and sealings in their country of origin, where they were part of a system of marking and tracking goods through space and time, testifies to a significant lacuna in the Levantine EBA world: the lack of an administrative system.

Zoomorphic figurines were, judging by their clay and finish, a by-product of ceramic production. It is therefore worth noting that little change can be observed from EB I: most figurines depict cattle and beasts of burden – probably donkeys – bearing panniers (see Chapter 2, Figure 2.12). If the

appearance of cattle (large and small) might be associated with agricultural or pastoral themes, the laden donkeys must refer to trade and transport.⁵⁶ Their loads are modelled to resemble either storage jars or baskets, alluding perhaps to the transport of liquids or dry agricultural produce.

Death and Burial

More than any other period within the Levantine Bronze Age, EB II stands out as the province of the “missing,” or non-commemorated and archaeologically underrepresented, dead.⁵⁷ With the possible exception of arid-zone tumulus fields (see below), not a single new burial ground was inaugurated in EB II, not even at urban sites founded at this time, such as Tel Dan, Tel Hazor and Tel Yarmuth. At sites with an EB I–II sequence (i.e., abandonment and rapid renewal of settlement), a distinction may be drawn between sites that had been provided in EB I with a large adjacent cemetery and those that had not. Where no earlier cemetery could be identified, there is no evidence for EB II burial; where tombs or cemeteries have been identified, there is evidence for a limited continuity. For example, a lone EB I tomb-cave discovered near Bet Yerah – the Kinneret tomb – contained a single – albeit richly endowed – EB II burial phase.⁵⁸ The same holds true for isolated caves found at Lebea, east of Sidon, at Asherat on the Galilee coast, and at Gadot in the Hula Valley.⁵⁹ Each of these seems to represent an attempt to maintain a territorial attachment to ancestral lands at some distance from the nearest EB II settlement. The large EB I cemeteries of Nahal Tavor and ‘Ein Assawir showed signs of reuse in EB II, with an uncertain relation to nearby settlements, while the opulent cemetery of EB I Tell el-Far‘ah (North) yielded, at most, a handful of EB II vessels (e.g., in Tomb 2), although the contemporary settlement on the mound flourished.⁶⁰ Two sites only, Jericho and Bab edh-Dhra‘, provide evidence for the hewing or construction of new tombs in EB II – in both cases, within the grounds of the EB I cemetery: at Jericho, two caves (A108 and A127) and a number of inhumations in rather uncertain contexts are ascribed to the EB II alone. Each of the complete caves contained upward of fifteen skeletons, seemingly representing repeated primary burials, accompanied by simple burial gifts – ceramic vessels, beads and a curious collection of perforated goat metatarsals. Another tomb, D12, which contained hundreds of inhumations, was used continuously in EB II and EB III.⁶¹ At Bab edh-Dhra‘, a single published shaft tomb (A4) has been attributed to the beginning of the period, but for the most part, the period is marked by a new burial pattern, which had begun to emerge in terminal EB I: the construction of freestanding charnel houses, or houses of the dead. The earliest of these charnel houses are round, and they contain the remains of ten to fifteen individuals. Later charnel houses have a rectangular broad-room plan, like that of the contemporary houses. They were in use from the late EB II to the end of EB III occupation at the

site. As at Jericho, the later tombs contained tens to hundreds of skeletons, of which only a small number should be attributed to EB II.⁶²

It thus emerges that only a small minority of the EB II town-dwelling population were interred in family tombs; most settlements had no recognizable cemetery, and in those cases where a cemetery or an isolated tomb has been identified, it has been found to contain a small number of individuals. Hence, the greater part of the EB II population – whatever their status during life – was accorded a different treatment at death, one that has left no archaeological traces. This absence, this lack of a recognizable burial tradition, serves as one of the most significant testimonies to social change in EB II. It suggests a weakening of the ties of families and lineages to specific plots – whether family tombs or village cemeteries – and could point to a more collective relation to the deceased as a member of the walled community as a whole, rather than of a particular family. Moreover, if cemeteries are conceived of as “mirror communities” of villages, then the absence of cemeteries places the onus of the collective sense of continuity on the living, built community. It is the town itself, its walls, houses and temples, that becomes a symbol of its own existence over time, embodying past, present and future. The abandonment of traditional cemeteries thus testifies to a shift in the concept of place: a genealogical affiliation based on continuous ancestral presence is replaced by the physical presence of the walled settlement itself. This presence confers a new collective identity based on horizontal social relations that obliterates earlier (linear) expressions of kinship.

In arid and marginal zones in the Negev desert and along the Dead Sea rift, a long-standing tradition of burial (or perhaps only commemoration) in cairns or grave circles was apparently maintained in EB II. Many cairns, invariably found to be empty, have been associated, mainly on the basis of proximity, with Arad-related pastoral sites of the Negev Highlands.⁶³

The End of EB II and the Evolution of Urban Consciousness in the Transition to EB III

The network of EB II towns and villages did not survive for long. By the end of the twenty-ninth century BCE major EB II towns lay abandoned, including Arad, Tell el-Far‘ah (North), Tel Bareqet, Qiryat Ata and others. Tell es-Sa‘idiya and Tell Abu al-Kharaz in the Jordan Valley suffered destructions, possibly by earthquake, and were not resettled for centuries. Areas of marked EB II expansion – the Hula Valley, the Golan plateau, Upper Galilee, the Negev Highlands and southern Sinai – were largely abandoned, with only a few fortified sites surviving the transition. Only two of thirty-seven surveyed Northern Samaria hill settlements survived into EB III.⁶⁴ Since these settlement regions comprised the chief consumers of regional commodity industries – ceramics in particular – their abandonment also marks the contraction or disappearance of these industries, signaling the collapse of internal Levantine

EB II trade networks. Contact with Egypt was lost as well for all but a few coastal sites, as Egypt abandoned the land routes across Sinai, preferring to invest in maritime trade with Byblos and points north. Nonetheless, these organizational and institutional changes did not constitute a cultural break: urban life in the surviving walled towns and its material expressions shows only subtle changes in the EB II–III transition. This transition can be characterized as the outcome of ongoing social negotiation – a resolution of economic and political contradictions that found its physical expression in a new configuration of settlement.

To review: a brief EB II, in some places no more than a century long, was marked by the appearance of new network of settlements that spread across the Levant, predicated on similar principles, namely:

1. The incorporation of communities within walled hilltop sites, accompanied by redefinition of local identities, by accumulation of wealth and by a need or wish of inhabitants or of leading social strata to demonstrate their power either inwardly, within the walls, or outwardly, toward neighboring towns or mobile groups in the countryside.
2. The simplification of material culture, emerging from the empowerment of regional specialized industries and the distribution of their products by means of a trade network.
3. The absence of observable expressions of rank, status and territoriality, achieved through levelling mechanisms, principally the uniformity of material culture and the suppression of tomb creation.

This network had hardly established itself before it began to change and undergo a transformation into what we recognize as EB III.

If EB I was, by broad consensus, a village society, should EB II walled settlements be characterized as urban? Though closure has yet to be achieved in this lively debate,⁶⁵ all would appear to agree that the new settlements fulfill some of the expectations one might have of urban sites, such as fortification and a degree of planning, but lack other important features, such as a large population (i.e., many thousands of inhabitants), writing and administration, and a fair share of the population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. Those who would define the settlements as urban would define the local towns as a partial expression of “full-fledged” urbanism, one that emulates or adopts important elements from the models established in the complex societies of neighboring regions, that is, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Those who reject Levantine urbanism point to the considerable distance from the Mesopotamian model, preferring to define the walled settlements as complex villages. It is increasingly clear, however, that there are many options for political mobilization, and that inequality, hierarchy and centralization could be negotiated.⁶⁶ Like other early attempts at institution-building, EB II embodies contradictions, exacerbated, perhaps, by the new temporalities of life within the fixed boundaries of fortified towns. These matters will be further discussed in the concluding pages of this chapter.

THE RISE AND FALL OF NEW ELITES IN EARLY BRONZE III

The beginning of EB III is marked by a striking alteration in the urban trajectory, expressed by changes in the pattern of settlement and by social and material transformations. These are all interlinked, so that the difference between the two urban phases is manifest, in many facets of the archaeological record, to a far greater extent than previously imagined. If the EB II can be characterized by the ascendancy of the totalizing social project, EB III is marked by the prominence of specific symbolic components in the built landscape at the expense of the urban package as a whole. During this period, the attempts to enforce uniformity unraveled and inequality came back into fashion. The severance of the southern Levant from Egypt, beginning with the Second Dynasty, when Egypt instituted regular trade with Byblos and the north Levantine coast, led to the withdrawal of the southern Levant from interregional trade, making it a field of internal contestation. The bulk of the following discussion therefore focuses on the south Levantine trajectory, whereas the Byblos enclave in the central coastal Levant, which was partly insulated from the south Levantine developments, merits separate treatment (see below section on “The Byblos Enclave”).

As noted earlier, the EB II–III transition was marked by widespread abandonment of settlements and aggregation in several urban centers. In consequence, most of what we know about the period comes from tell excavations. These have been quite widespread: in the Judean hills and adjacent lowlands and coastal plain, there was a relatively flourishing settlement, marked by the resumption or initiation of settlement in fortified sites such as Tell er-Rumeida, Tel Halif, Tell el-Hesi and Tell es-Sakan, or the continuation of settlement on a large scale at sites such as Tell es-Safi and Tel Yarmuth. In the central hill zone occupation continued at et-Tell (‘Ai) and Tel Dothan, on the Transjordanian plateau, sites of the period have been excavated at Tell el-Umeiri, Kh. al-Batraway, and Kh. ez-Zeraqun, and in the Dead Sea and Jordan Valleys – at Bab edh-Dhra‘, Tell Numayra, Jericho, Tell Handaquq South, Tel Bet Shean, Tel Bet Yerah, Tel Hazor and Tel Dan. A number of sites in the Bet Shean Valley, the Jezreel Valley and Lower Galilee show evidence for the village settlement of Khirbet Kerak ware (KKW) producers. In the western Jezreel Valley there are significant occupation levels at Megiddo, and evidence from Tell Ta’anek and Tel Qashish. The Lawieh site is the only surviving EB III site on the Golan plateau, whereas the few identified sites along the Lebanese coast – Sidon, Tell Fadous, Byblos and Arqa – are continuously occupied throughout the third millennium.

Surveys conducted both east and west of the Jordan River attribute many sites to the EBA as a whole or to the EB II–III, but only a few surveys are able to ascribe sites specifically to EB III, and when they do, it is often difficult to make out the size of the sites or the depth of deposits in them. As will be seen

presently, the ability to ascribe surveyed sites to one of the modes of EB III settlement can greatly impact our understanding the period. As things stand, the surveys point to the disappearance of village settlement from entire regions – especially in the northern part of the southern Levant – and to a shift in the center of gravity toward the Transjordanian plateau and the southern coastal plain.

Few cemeteries are ascribed to EB III – mainly those of Bab edh-Dhra' and Jericho, already mentioned in relation to EB II. However, there is an argument to be made that some of the above-ground burial fields – including some megalithic tombs of the Jordan–Dead Sea basin and tumuli of the Negev and Carmel highlands – might have been established in EB III. Moreover, some of the numerous Negev settlements attributed to the EB IV/IBA might have been founded in late EB III.

Stratigraphy, Chronology and the Problem of Continuity

Early Bronze III is about 450 years long (c. 2850–2400 BCE), but few sites demonstrate a continuous occupation over that entire span of time. The disconnect between most sites of the Levant and Egypt rules out a tight synchronization between local subdivisions of the period and Egyptian dynastic chronology, so we must make do with local archaeological sequences alone. The settlements showing the most convincing stratified occupation sequences for EB III are Tel Bet Yerah, Tel Megiddo and Tel Yarmuth (Byblos, which could play a central role in this discussion, provides only schematic details, due to the confused state of excavation and publication). At Tel Bet Yerah, six phases are ascribed to Period D, the EB III, and one to Period E, termed “Final EB” in recent publications.⁶⁷ However, the full sequence can be observed only in the south part of the mound, near the fortifications, whereas other parts of the site show only two or three phases of occupation. At Tel Megiddo, the most recent excavations ascribe three or four phases to EB III,⁶⁸ and this is the case at Tel Yarmuth and at additional sites in the south. Many other sites show only one or two phases in EB III. Radiometric dates available from some of the sites are inconsistent:⁶⁹ Kh. ez-Zeraqun appears to have been abandoned early, by c. 2700 BCE. A number of sites appear to have been occupied until the twenty-sixth century (Tel Yarmuth, Tell Numayra, Kh. al-Batrawy, Jericho and Tell es-Safi). Tell es-Sakan, Megiddo and Bet Yerah appear to be among the few candidates for a post-2500 BCE occupation, judging by radiocarbon and stratigraphy (see Table 3.1).

The appearance of KKW is considered to be a diagnostic marker for EB III in the northern Jordan and Bet Shean Valleys. At sites such as Tel Yaqush, Bet Shean and Bet Yerah (Khirbet Kerak) itself, the introduction of this tradition coincides with the beginning of the period. At Tel Hazor, Tel Bet Yerah and

Table 3.1 Stratigraphic phasing and radiometric dates for the principal sites of the southern Levant, Early Bronze III

Site	No. of EB III strata	Character of strata ^a	Latest ¹⁴ C date (approximate)	Reference
Dan	2–3			Greenberg 1996
Hazor	2	KKW and post-KKW phases		Greenberg 1997
Fadous	2		2500 BCE	Höflmayer et al. 2014
Bet Yerah	2–6	KKW and post-KKW phases	2600 BCE (for KKW phase)	Greenberg 2017
Bet She'an	7	6 KKW phases and one post-KKW phase		Mazar 2012
Yaqush	2	KKW phases		Novacek 2007
Qashish	1 (2?)	Stratum XIIA (early EB III) and Stratum XI (possibly late EB III)		Ben-Tor, Bonfil and Zuckerman 2003
Qishyon	1–2	KKW phase(s)	2500 BCE (penultimate)	Cohen-Amon and Amiran 1981
Megiddo	4			Regev et al. 2014
'Ai	2–3	Some KKW		Callaway 1980
Tel Yarmuth	4		2500 BCE	Regev, Miroschedji and Boaretto 2012
Safi	4		2580 BCE	Shai et al. 2014
Jericho	2 (with subphases)		2600 BCE	Bruins and van der Plicht 2001
Hesi	2–3			Segev 1989
Rumeida	3–4		2500	Eisenberg 2011; Regev et al. 2012
Sakan	5		2500 BCE	Regev et al. 2012
Batrawy	2		2600 BCE	Höflmayer 2014
Umeiri	1		2700 BCE	Regev et al. 2012
Bab edh-Dhra'	4			Rast and Schaub 2003
Numayra	3			
Handaquq	4		2550 BCE	Chesson and Goodale 2014
South				Chesson 1998

^a KKW, Khirbet Kerak ware.

Tel Bet Shean there are also EB III deposits that may be characterized as “post Khirbet Kerak.” This permits us to conclude that sites with one or two KKW-bearing phases only, and with no later EB III deposits, were abandoned well before the end of EB III.

The upshot of this stratigraphic and chronological picture is far-reaching: just as some sites had been temporarily abandoned in EB II, so too were many EB III sites settled for only part of the 450-year period. In fact, not only may we assume that some sites were abandoned for a time at the start or before the end of the period, but it is likely that some sites were periodically abandoned and resettled, or that parts of sites might have been abandoned at any given stage – as can be seen at Bet Yerah. The ensuing map of EB III settlement must be seen as a dynamic one, composed of occupied or partly occupied sites, abandoned sites, and entire regions that may have seen no permanent settlement. In some cases, settlement clusters may be reconstructed, such as the sites of the southern coastal plain or of the southeast Dead Sea plain; in others, fortified centers are relatively isolated in the landscape. The implications of this reconstruction will be further explored below.

Urban Structure, Public Architecture and Buildings of the Elite

The main imprint of EB III on the landscape was architectural: this period excels in the construction of massive fortifications – far beyond what seems to be warranted, given the lack of evidence for warfare or advanced siege technology – and large buildings for public (or possibly only elite) use that reveal sophisticated planning and/or high-quality execution. These investments in defensive infrastructure and prestige-enhancing structures testify to a shift in the dominant social ideology as compared to the equilibrium-seeking EB II. Monumental construction dwarfs other aspects of urban planning, of which there is far less evidence than in the previous period.

Tel Yarmuth provides a striking instance of the trend described above. There, an EB III domestic quarter (Stratum B₃) was dramatically altered in the wake of the construction of a palatial structure (Palace B₂) in a more advanced stage of the period.⁷⁰ Before the construction of the palace, the quarter consisted of a dense, disordered warren of alleyways and houses. In the north part of the excavated area, the rectangular kernel of a well-built, spacious multiroomed structure stood out. As noted, the quarter was demolished before (or perhaps in preparation for) the construction of the palace in its earlier version. In Stratum B₁, when the palace was completely rebuilt, on a regular, detailed plan and to a very high standard (a detailed description will be offered below), a new domestic quarter was built along its northern flank, composed of a dense cluster of rooms that do not allow us to distinguish individual houses. Far roomier houses, built to a standard nearly equal to that of the palace, were placed along the western flank of the palace. The architectural ranking of late EB III at Tel Yarmuth is thus

quite clear: Palace B1, the patrician houses to its west, and the commoners' housing to its north (see below, Figure 3.13).

At Tel Bet Yerah, the picture is far less clear. While some excavated fields suggest that the former urban structure was maintained,⁷¹ others show evidence of the abandonment of streets and houses – especially near the EB II gate – and the influx of squatters camping within the abandoned remains.⁷² In the north of the tell a large public structure – the Circles Building (described below) – was built at the very start of the period on top of abandoned EB II houses. Where continuity of occupation was maintained, the square, multi-roomed house plan is prominent. This house type has been observed at other sites with domestic EB III architecture, such as Tell Numayra and Tell Handaquq (South) on the eastern side of the Dead Sea basin, or Tel Gat-Hefer and Tell es-Safi to its west.⁷³

Domestic assemblages suggest that town-dwellers continued to practice agriculture, as evidenced by a large number of finds related to the processing and storage of agricultural products. This is true at large sites like Bet Yerah, where archaeobotanic and zooarchaeological analyses indicate household processing and small-scale livestock management, or Yarmuth, where a recent study appears to have identified fertilized fields just outside its walls, and at small sites like Numayra, where a full complement of processing and storage installations, alongside carbonized plant remains of wheat, barley, fruits and textiles, was found (Figure 3.10).⁷⁴ However, the remarkable concentration of storage pits and vessels in the Numayra houses, compared to Bet Yerah,

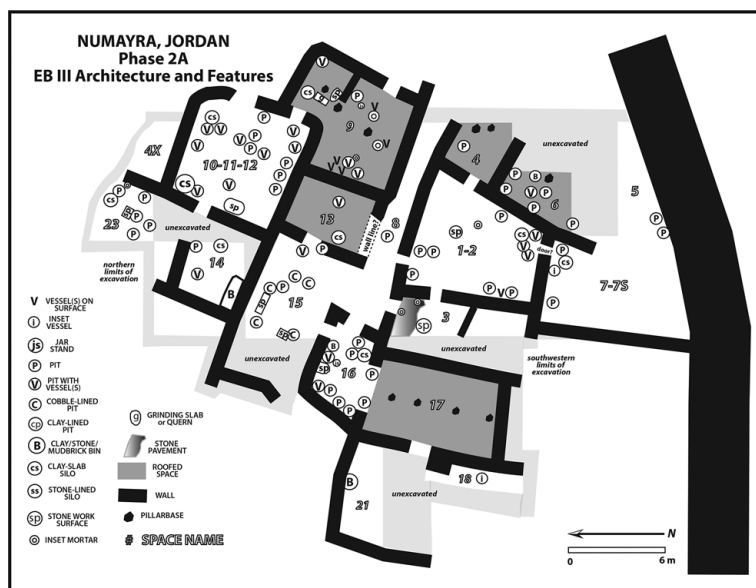


Figure 3.10 Houses and associated pits and installations at Tell Numayra. Courtesy of M. Chesson.

suggests that the inhabitants of the latter might have had to turn over a portion of their yield to local authorities, whereas inhabitants of a half-hectare village like Numayra were spared that requirement, retaining full control of household production and consumption.

Fortifications. The trend observed in late EB II – the enhancing of existing fortifications and the blockage of secondary passages (“postern gates”) – intensifies at nearly all EB III sites. In addition, new fortification techniques were introduced. They included the addition of towers built against or on top of the curtain wall, or bonded to it (as seen in EB II Yarmuth, but with far less skill), conversion of direct-entry gates to bent-entry gates, and a proliferation of insets and angles in the curtain wall itself. In contrast to EB II, there is no dominant fortification style: each town emphasized different details. The following review focuses on a number of noteworthy examples.

At Tel Dan, fortifications were observed at three points on the mound’s perimeter: at the northwest corner and in two sections excavated on the eastern flank.⁷⁵ While the excavations at the southeast corner uncovered only fragments of massive walls beneath the Middle Bronze Age gate – perhaps part of an earlier gate system, the two other fields revealed the 12-meter-wide and 10-meter-high fortification, preserved beneath the Middle Bronze Age ramparts. At the northwest corner, the latest EB III fortification system (built over an earlier system that can just be made out beneath the outer face) consists of a massive stone and mudbrick wall, 4.5 meters thick, furnished with six rectangular external 2×3 meter buttresses. A massive lower buttress abuts the wall on the outside and additional buttresses were found on the interior.

The Lawieh (Leviah) enclosure in the central Golan Heights was built on a long, narrow ridge surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs. The ridge was traversed, from side to side, by three parallel walls. The outermost wall, which blocked the base of the ridge and separated it from the plateau to its east, was the most massive, at 16 meters wide. A gate, protected by two square towers, was built near the southern end of the wall. The gate was blocked, while still in use, by a massive stone wall which must have impeded entry. Another gate was found in the 4-meter-wide middle wall; this gate, too, was blocked. A recent publication attributes quantities of slingstones found near the outer gate to the final battle at the site. If this is indeed the case, then it would seem that the fate of this massively fortified site was sealed by hand-to-hand combat of the most primitive kind, leaving the town walls intact.⁷⁶

Kh. ez-Zeraqun, in northern Transjordan, was first encircled in EB II with a modest 2- to 3-meter-thick wall. Two gates were found, one in the lower city and one in the upper city, and no less than seven posterns.⁷⁷ Most of the posterns were blocked in EB II, when the wall was reinforced by the addition of an external buttress along its entire length. Outside the lower gate the excavators identified a plaza and a fenced area nearby, which has been interpreted as a commercial precinct or market. During EB III, the town wall was



Figure 3.11 The upper town of Kh. ez-Zeraqun; note blocked posterns in the town wall and the partial blockage of the gate. Drawn by I. Ben-Ezra after Herzog 1997: fig. 3.28 and Douglas 2011: fig. 3.

thickened to a total width of 10 meters, a large bastion was built near the upper gate, the market was abandoned, and the two gate passages were progressively narrowed and screened by walls and gate structures (Figure 3.11). Eventually, the lower gate was completely blocked, and entry to the town enabled by a flight of stairs that led up *over* the blocked gate and thence down to street level.

The southeast gate of Tel Bet Yerah was blocked with mudbricks at the start of EB III.⁷⁸ Some time later, a new, poorly preserved stone-based wall (Wall B) replaced the EB II fortifications (Wall A). In late EB III, a completely new fortification line was built just inside the previous fortifications, and traced over a length of 700 meters, from the sea scarp in the southeast to more than halfway up the western flank of the mound. Wall C is massive, with 3- to 7-meter-wide fieldstone foundations, at times preserved to well over 2 meters in height (Figure 3.12), topped by up to ten courses of mudbrick. It has a sawtooth plan, and was furnished with at least fifteen rectangular and circular towers. At an estimated volume of 40,000 cubic meters, this wall triples earlier construction, not only in direct costs (i.e., labor years required for construction), but in implied costs: maintenance of the mudbrick superstructure, manning gates and towers, etc. Thus, while the actual construction of the wall could have been achieved, with a concerted effort, within a few years (for the economics of wall construction, see Burke 2008), its continued functioning would have required a reorientation of priorities on the part of the townspeople and their leadership. Wall C combines knowledge of military engineering with inconsistent construction quality. Certain rules are adhered to,



Figure 3.12 Late EB III Wall C at Tel Bet Yerah (Bar-Adon excavations of 1952), looking east. Israel Antiquities Authority archives.

such as the sawtooth plan and the narrower perpendicular wall segment at each reentrant angle, yet the length of the various segments is inconsistent. While not of uniform size or plan, the round towers cluster around a diameter of 6–6.5 meters, and the best-preserved rectangular ones show a close resemblance in plan and execution (with the exception of a large double-roomed bastion that may have protected a gateway). All are bonded to the town wall and have shared characteristics such as thinner external walls and the lack of a ground-level entry. The latter feature suggests that the lower part of all the towers could have been used for storage. Unlike the earlier fortifications, Wall C required the demolition of preexisting structures and appears to have led to the renovation of adjacent domestic quarters. No gates were identified with certainty, although there are several plausible locations for one or more.

At Kh. al-Batraway, east of Amman, an EB II town had been fortified by a 3.2-meter-wide wall, built in 6-meter segments, furnished with a narrow, direct-entry gate.⁷⁹ This gate was blocked in EB III and two additional belts of fortification were added outside the original wall, resulting in a 7-meter-wide fortification, protected by a stone glacis and two rectangular towers. Remains of an internal staircase were found leading to the top of the wall. A similar sequence of fortification-enhancement can be seen at the site of et-Tell ('Ai), in the hills north of Jerusalem: the EB II wall was doubled, its posterns blocked, and a massive bastion was built near the main gate in EB III.

Another hill-country site, Tell er-Rumeida in Hebron, shows the use of gate-blockage and stairs leading up and over the stone wall at the point

of entry.⁸⁰ A broad staircase was built over against the external face of the 6-meter-wide segmented wall, and a corresponding earthen ramp was identified on the interior. The earlier, presumably blocked gate lay just outside the excavation area. Notably, a similar configuration seems to have been discovered at Tell Fadous-Kfarabida, on the north Lebanese coast (which the excavator compares to the northeast and northwest gates at Byblos, although there it is not clear whether passage was through or over the stone wall).⁸¹ Thus, there is a widespread – although not universal – phenomenon of increasingly impeded passage into fortified towns during EB III, culminating in the creation of raised gate passages that could be approached only on foot and which could easily be removed in times of war (but never were).

Tel Yarmuth, whose massive and sophisticated late EB II fortification anticipated EB III developments, appears to buck the trend of most contemporary settlements: rather than increasing the bulk of its fortifications, Yarmuth shows a gradual relaxation in defensive thinking (perhaps enabled by the sheer size of the still-extant EB II bulwarks).⁸² In early EB III, a series of large rectangular stone platforms (10–12 × 30–40 meters) was constructed on top of the earlier ramparts. How these were used remains undetermined: not forming a consecutive barrier, they may have served as foundations for bastions. Later in EB III, some of these platforms were put out of use by the construction of Palace B1, reinforcing the sense of a change in priorities of the local leadership.

Other sites of the southern coastal plain and foothills show varying trajectories: Tell es-Sakan, on the coast, Tell el-Hesi to its east, and Tel Halif in the southern Judean foothills were all massively fortified at the start of EB III, but the last site has evidence for domestic construction on top of the fortification, effectively putting it out of use in the latter stages of EB III.⁸³

EB III sites thus show some conspicuous trends, albeit with exceptions:

- Dominance of fortifications, in terms both of bulk and of extent: in a hypothetical 4-hectare town, a 5-meter-wide fortification will cover 10 percent of the site, not including towers that could have permitted a permanent presence on the walls, whether in the form of raised structures or as cavities for storage.
- Augmentation and isolation: there is a notable trend toward the thickening and raising of bulwarks, construction of glacis and blockage of gates. Over time, the fortifications become functional impediments, hindering movement in and out of the towns – especially for laden pack-animals – and conveying a sense of diminishing external interaction.
- Segmentary or aggregative construction, suggesting episodic or localized recruitment for construction or repair or, alternately, site-wide mobilization for projects of urban renewal.

It is worth repeating that the period shows no advances in siege or assault technology, whether in new types of weapons or improved materials (bronze

was not yet present in the EBA Levant). The augmentation of fortifications was, therefore, a response to a threat that cannot be characterized in terms of military means and materiel.

Buildings of the Elite (“Palaces”). These may be categorized under two headings: (1) multiroomed, multipurpose structures showing evidence of accumulation of wealth (similar to the proposed palaces at Arad and Tell es-Sa‘idiya in EB II) and (2) compounds whose layout or content suggests administrative functions, and which exhibit unusual care in their planning and construction. The first category might include buildings identified as palaces at Kh. ez-Zeraqun and Kh. Batrawy. The second includes the two sequential fortified compounds at Tel Yarmuth. A possible addition to the second category is an impressive but enigmatic building adjacent to the Megiddo cultic complex.

At Kh. ez-Zeraqun, on the interior (eastern) side of the upper gate plaza and facing a cultic temenos (below), there extends a densely built-up compound, largely insulated from external access.⁸⁴ The compound, established in EB II and enlarged in EB III, has a well-built core comprising a spacious pillared hall, a courtyard, and an adjacent domestic structure, with the intervening space occupied by a cluster of smaller, simply built rooms (Figure 3.11). The identification of this complex as a palace was based on the quality of construction, the large number of storage vessels that it contained and the inaccessibility of most of its rooms from the adjacent streets. At Kh. al-Batrawy, two broad-room halls have been excavated, separated by a corridor; this has been interpreted as a two-winged palace by the excavators, with the western wing providing a rich assemblage of finds that included storage vessels, presentation vessels (some of which are of elaborate design), a cache of bronze tools, remains of a bearskin, and even a potter’s tournette.⁸⁵ The term used by the excavators – *palazzo* – might be interpreted to indicate an elite residence, rather than a royal palace.

Tel Yarmuth Palace B1 is a more convincing example of a palace or manor house fulfilling several functions: the residence of the leading family, a seat of administration and the center of an estate.⁸⁶ The square compound covers about 6,000 square meters just inside the city gate (Figure 3.13). Surrounded by a solid stone wall, it is divided into two main areas: a large courtyard that could have been used as a stockyard occupies its southwestern half, whereas its northeastern half shows three subdivisions – a domestic complex in the north (poorly preserved), an economic sector that comprised a courtyard and adjoining storerooms (in which dozens of storage pithoi and jars were discovered) in the center, and an “official” sector in the south, which included a pillared entrance hall, a small courtyard and an audience hall or throne room. The “official” sector was isolated from the other parts of the compound, thus restricting external access to the economic and domestic sectors.

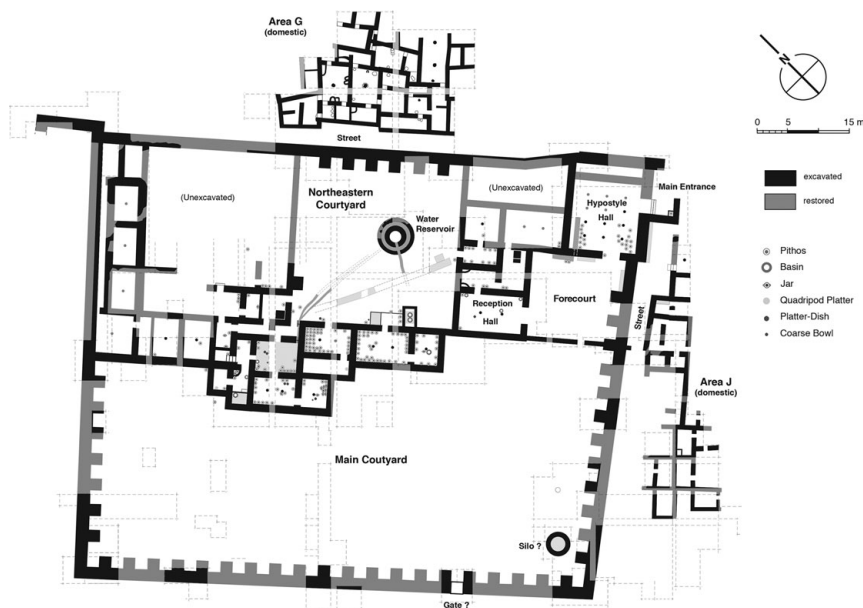


Figure 3.13 Plan of Yarmuth Palace B1 and the adjacent houses.
Courtesy of P. de Miroschedji.

P. de Miroschedji (2001) has identified several components that bear witness to detailed planning of the palace and an extraordinary level of care taken in its construction. These include a fixed unit of measurement – identified as the “long” Egyptian cubit of about 52 centimeters – that was used to establish the breadth of internal walls, external walls, doorways, and the buttresses of the perimeter wall, as well as the formal division of space within the compound. Access to different functional sectors within the compound was regulated by the deliberate placement of doors and passages; courtyards were marked by the use of internal buttresses on the corresponding segments of the perimeter wall. The quality of construction can be seen in the consistent right-angled construction (rarely seen in domestic buildings), in the widespread use of molded elements (especially pillar bases), and in the fine-pebble pavements and door-sills. Palace B1 was preceded by an earlier palace, B2, of which parts of twenty-six rooms and courts were excavated, showing the same characteristics as the later structure. The earlier palace was built on the remains of an EB III residential quarter that must have been demolished to make way for the elite structures above it.

Building 3177 at Megiddo⁸⁷ was erected as part of the renovation of the cultic complex after a lengthy period of abandonment in EB II and partial use in early EB III. Two asymmetrical wings of eight to ten rooms and courts,

some plastered and some paved with cobblestones, cover an area of about 400 square meters. It is difficult to discern the function of the various parts of the structure and – because the building was partly dismantled and replaced by a monumental entrance structure to the nearby temple compound (see below) – there were no finds in context that might cast light on the matter. The building's palatial designation is based on its size and quality of construction, but its proximity to the cultic complex (in its early phase) might point to a function connected to the adjacent temples.

With the exception of Building 3177 at Megiddo, the buildings identified as palaces – abandoned rapidly or destroyed – provided a wealth of evidence for the storage and consumption of staple goods, including numerous pithoi and storage jars, mixing vats and large platters, and – in some cases – jugs and mugs. By contrast, luxury items (e.g., jewelry, decorated containers, weapons, etc.) are virtually non-existent, nor is there evidence of any kind for formal administrative practices (seals, sealings or other bureaucratic devices). Notable in their absence, as well, are any objects that might testify to regular trade contacts with neighboring lands or even neighboring regions. In this sense, the “palaces” of the EB III – perhaps better characterized as manor houses – differ from most of their later Bronze Age counterparts.

Temples. A number of compounds that include one to four structures, stone platforms and walled courtyards have been identified, at various sites, as cultic or ritual enclosures.⁸⁸ These were built in accessible and prominent locations and are likely to have been monuments of considerable symbolic significance in the urban landscape. The most complete and harmonious ensemble of structures is that discovered at Kh ez-Zeraqun: a 1,200-square-meter temenos containing three broad-room halls (75–120 square meters in size), a raised round stone platform, about 6 meters in diameter, and an additional service structure, all built around an inner 150-square-meter courtyard (see Figure 3.11, above).⁸⁹ Each of the three broad-room buildings, situated on the north, south and east sides of the courtyard, had a central hall whose roof was supported by two pillars, but only the two smaller ones had an entrance portico defined by antae, while the largest lacked antae and portico (but had an appended room at the rear). The service structure contained a number of installations and vessels related to food preparation; it abutted the platform, the top of which was approached from the courtyard by a flight of stairs. A cache of ceramic vessels was found in a pit within the enclosure, including a number of storage vessels, a KKW mug and a platter. Apart from this cache, and from a rare bowl type with rope decoration, no objects were found that could be attributed to the cult or ceremony. The faunal assemblage points to a bias toward certain cuts of sheep/goat. Seen together with the food-related ceramics, this evidence points to the possibility that ceremonies conducted in the compound would have involved some form of food consumption.

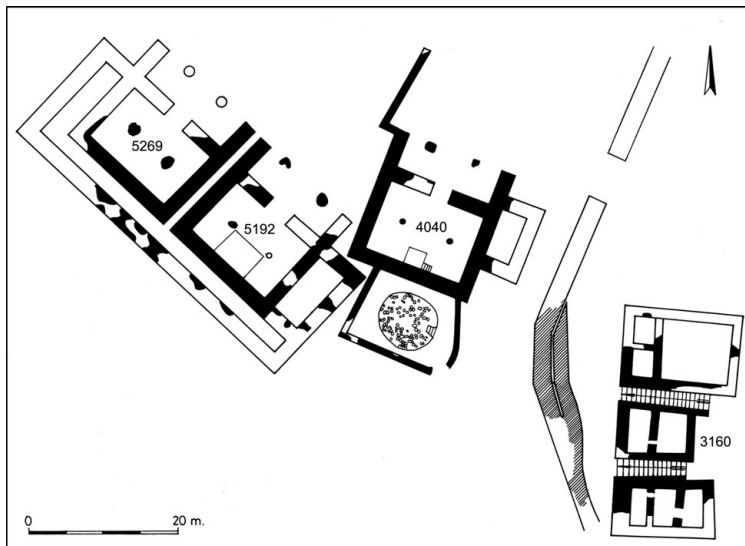


Figure 3.14 The Megiddo temple complex in late EB III. After Herzog 1997: fig. 3.24.

A cultic complex similar in composition to that of Zeraqun, but much more extensive and massive in construction, lies on the summit of Tel Megiddo (Figure 3.14).⁹⁰ It will be recalled that the site of the Stratum J2–J4 temples had been abandoned in EB II, over a stretch of at least 100 years. In early EB III (Stratum J6 in the Tel Aviv nomenclature) a number of small structures of uncertain use were found within the cultic precinct, but these were destroyed at some point and replaced by a new cultic complex that eventually was to comprise (in Stratum J7) three nearly identical broad-room structures with a porticoed porch (each about 200 square meters in area) and a large round platform or altar approached by a flight of stairs. The latter structure appears to have been the earliest, possibly built in Stratum J6. The orientation of these structures appears haphazard, when compared with the Zeraqun precinct: the three temples all face north, with one (Temple 4040) sharing an orientation with the nearby “palace” (Building 3177) and the other two (5269 and 5292) clearly built together, at an oblique angle to – and with no apparent recognition of – the first. The focus of cultic activity is also hard to make out, as the “altar” lies behind the temples, fenced in by a narrow wall. The Megiddo temples – like all others of the period – yielded no finds of a ceremonial character. Nonetheless, the entire precinct, including Building 3177 and a broad monumental stairway that replaced it in late EB III (Building 3160), are indicative of the renewal – after the EB II hiatus – of a regionally important cultic and ceremonial center.

More modest in scale are compounds, which share several of the characteristics described above, that were discovered at Bab edh-Dhra‘ and Kh. al-

Batrawy.⁹¹ At both sites, in a prominent location set apart from domestic structures, pillared broad-room halls face a broad court in which there was a modest stone platform. At both sites the EB III temple was built on the site of an earlier, EB II, structure, also identified as a cult place. In the later structure at Batrawy, an internal platform was built at the left (west) end of the hall, fronted by two stones identified as stelae. Like other purported temples, there was little tangible evidence for the nature of the cult; their identification rests on their location and isolation within the town.

Another temple was excavated nearly a century ago on the acropolis of 'Ai (et-Tell). Attributed on general stratigraphic principles to both EB II and III, no finds earlier than EB III have been ascribed to the structure; it is therefore described here, although an earlier foundation, in EB I or II, is possible.⁹² Like the temples of Batrawy and Bab edh-Dhra', it is a prominent, isolated structure, focused on a main broad-room hall with four pillar bases. Unlike the other two, the building is quite large (200 square meters), showing an outstanding quality of construction and a rather complicated ground plan for the complex as a whole. The walls of the main hall were built of carefully dressed stones, sized and arranged in brick-like courses. The pillar bases – particularly those of its second phase, are carefully dressed as well. Two antae emerge from the eastern façade, but they appear to extend beyond the entrance porch to enclose the temple courtyard (various attempts at reconstruction differ on this detail). Subsidiary chambers (in the later phase) or a rear corridor (in the earlier phase) enclose the hall on three sides. The entire compound was set apart from the rest of the town by a wall or terrace. No cult furniture was found in this building. However, another location within the city walls did provide an assemblage of cultic artifacts: this is "Sanctuary A" – a simple, small three-roomed structure abutting the city wall.⁹³ Although destroyed with the EB III town, Sanctuary A contained an assemblage compiled of older items that can be attributed to EB II. They included ceramic goblets, Egyptian alabaster bowls, a jar and a zoomorphic vessel, a greenstone axe of Caucasian origin and ivory objects. Joseph Callaway, who excavated at 'Ai in the 1960s and 1970s, suggested that these objects originated in the acropolis temple, but as we have seen, all buildings identified as temples have turned out to be free of cultic furniture; it is therefore more likely that the finds were a ceremonial cache belonging to one of the leading families in the town.

All the ostensible temples share a prominent, isolated location; often set apart by a temenos or internal wall, they all lack specific cult furniture (apart from external – and sometimes internal – platforms), iconography or votive objects. They represent collective construction efforts and, hence, the symbolic capital of the community as a whole, but they do not appear to be powerful institutions in themselves: there is no evidence for a cadre of clerics, for the existence of a permanent maintenance staff or for the storage of goods – at least not to the extent that would enable the temple to become a central

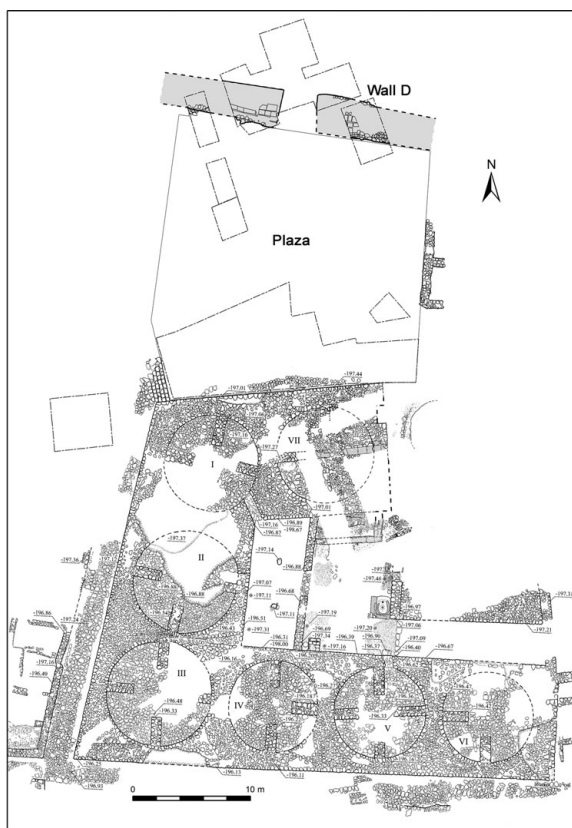


Figure 3.15 Plan of the Circles Building and plaza at Tel Bet Yerah. Tel Bet Yerah Excavation Project.

player in the urban economy. Rather than an instrument of a religious elite, temples seem to be locales of regular or occasional public ceremonies that might have been shared with extra-mural populations: pastoralists, nomads or inhabitants of seasonal sites associated with the towns by virtue of kinship or tradition.

The Circles Building at Bet Yerah. Positioned somewhere between elite–secular and public–cultic construction is the enigmatic “Circles Building” or “Granary” of Tel Bet Yerah. This building, placed near the highest part of the mound and occupying a space as large as that of the cultic precinct of Kh. ez-Zeraqun, was first excavated in 1945–1946 by the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society and recently reexamined by Tel Aviv University (Figure 3.15).⁹⁴ Built at the cusp of EB II and III, over the remains of earlier EB II domestic structures, the building has deep foundations that form three broad platforms arranged in the form of a truncated U. Within each platform there are slightly depressed circles, 8–9 meters in diameter: one in the northern platform, three in the western platform and three in the south. Each circle is symmetrically divided in four by interior radial walls that do not reach the center of the circles, which were carefully paved with stone slabs. The area enclosed by the

three platforms includes a 50-square-meter pillared hall, fronted by a courtyard paved with small cobblestones. A ramp built along the western edge of the northern platform leads down to a 500-square-meter plaza that fronts the entire northern façade of the building. Architectural analysis of the building shows that it is a carefully conceived structure, planted within a preexisting grid of paved streets and abutting the plaza and acropolis wall that had been laid out in EB II. The units of measure used for this structure are different from those used at Tel Yarmuth, appearing to be based on a “cubit of pace” (about 75 centimeters), a short Egyptian cubit (about 45 centimeters) and possibly a Sumerian foot (about 29 centimeters).

The original nature and function of the structure remain enigmatic, due largely to the fact that a short time after the stone foundations of the building were completed, and perhaps before the building of its superstructure, of which only one or two courses of mudbrick remain, it was abandoned by its builders and immediately reoccupied – in early EB III – by squatters who dismantled parts of it, added expedient steps, plaster installations, partition walls and a large oven or kiln, and disposed of large quantities of refuse in and around the building, particularly in the northern plaza. Their activities obliterated any evidence that might have existed for the original purpose of the building, and only the fragmented remains of scores of shattered stone mace heads found in and around the building might hint to its function in the service of leading elites.

The ubiquity of elite structures in EB III fortified centers reinforces the portrait painted by the fortifications: EB III architecture underscores the ability of those in the leading social strata to recruit the populace of the town – and perhaps of outlying settlements – for extensive or prestigious construction projects. Concomitantly, the very need for fortification, and especially the evidence for construction on abandoned – or possibly expropriated – domestic plots testifies to internal tensions within and between these fortified centers. Moreover, the remarkable transformations effected in various parts of Tel Yarmuth, Megiddo, or Bet Yerah, where entire domestic quarters were razed and replaced by planned structures and entire fortification systems were superannuated, may be indicative of the need to reverse processes of urban decay caused by partial/temporary abandonment.⁹⁵ Internal contradictions and urban decay required repeated efforts to rebuild and redefine the nature of Levantine urbanism, in order to preserve the bond between towns and their inhabitants while asserting their power and territorial control. The institution of metrology and architectural planning presents itself as a resolution to one of the contradictions of EB II society: the tension between a dominant urban “strategy” and the “tactics” of those who walked the street,⁹⁶ that is, between the attempt to impose order on domestic and public construction within the city walls and the everyday needs of people or the demands of important social interactions. By creating formally planned structures, often at the expense of

domestic dwellings, elites exhibited their will and ability to control space, yet simultaneously they relinquished control over the remaining spaces and domestic quarters, allowing chaotic construction and private encroachment on public space away from the central institutions. Thus, the compass of urban influence was actually reduced.

Mortuary Presence and Absence

Given the sweeping social transformations in EB III, it might be surprising to discover that little changed in the world of mortuary practices. As in EB II, there is no evidence for the installation of new cemeteries in EB III or for the construction of tombs in fortified centers. Only the two towns with a developed EB II tradition – Jericho and Bab edh-Dhra' – show continuity into EB III. At Jericho, several large cave-tombs (Tombs A and 351 excavated by Garstang, Tombs D12, F2, F3 and F4 excavated by Kenyon) each with scores and even hundreds of interments, were in use in both periods.⁹⁷ Burial offerings were fairly uniform throughout the period and rarely allow the attribution of particular artifacts to specific individuals. In other words, burials appear to place a greater emphasis on the membership of the deceased in a community or collective, rather than on individual identities. At Bab edh-Dhra', the use of above-ground charnel houses continued and intensified in EB III. Meredith Chesson has suggested that each structure represented one of the houses – a category that combines elements of kinship and political power – of which the town was composed. The dead, she proposed, were placed on wooden shelves, accompanied by personal burial gifts (which only occasionally included items of high value) in a manner that would preserve their individual identity, while incorporating them in the collective (Figure 3.16).⁹⁸

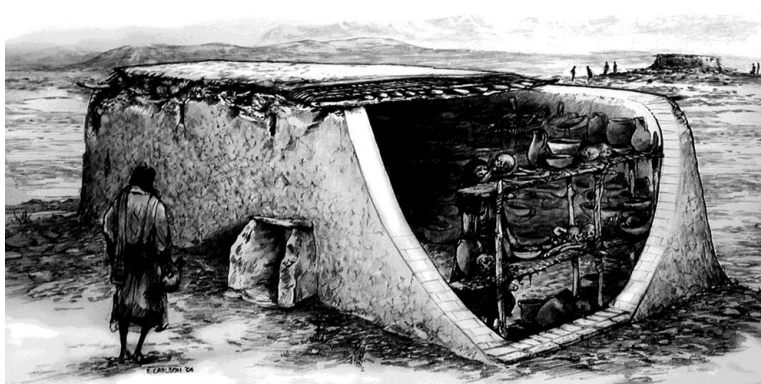


Figure 3.16 Reconstruction of EB III charnel house at Bab edh-Dhra'. Drawing by Eric Carlson. Courtesy of M. Chesson.

As in EB II, there is some evidence for the continued construction – in regions marginal to urban settlement that may have been frequented by otherwise “invisible” populations – of above-ground burial monuments: cairns, megalithic graves and burial circles. But while the earlier tumuli were largely confined to arid regions such as the Negev Highlands, the above-ground cemeteries attributed to EB III lie further north, in the Carmel range and parts of the Hula Valley that were vacated by permanent settlement.⁹⁹

The absence of any kind of “royal” burials (e.g., in the palatial compounds) or of any clear-cut articulation of status at death – in sharp contrast to common practice in, for example, late third millennium Syria¹⁰⁰ – testifies to the power of the collective ideology that formed the basis for EB II urbanism. Thus, even as towns showed increasing signs of stratification and social gaps, these distinctions found no permanent expression in the most important rite of passage, the funeral. The corporate basis of south Levantine urbanism was maintained, and all were perceived as equal in death.

Crafts and Industries

If the EB II was characterized by centralized industries and sophisticated intra- and interregional distribution networks, EB III is characterized by decentralization – a proliferation of local industries (ceramic workshops in particular) – and by a decline interregional trade and exchange. There was no significant change in ceramic technology: a detailed examination of Jordan Valley industries has shown technological continuity and close relations between potters at various sites who clearly belong to a single tradition, continuous with EB II.¹⁰¹ But the disruption of trade networks, the resultant shrinking of the consumer base, and the need to work with local raw materials, on the one hand, and shifts in the style of consumption, on the other, led to technical and morphological adjustments in both ceramic and ground-stone production. Pots became coarser and reflect more widespread use of the tournette, whereas the ground-stone industry virtually abandoned basalt, in favor of the ubiquitous and easily processed limestone. The renewal of local, site-specific production provided more opportunities for variety in the material assemblage (including the absorption of alien traditions – see below section on “Khirbet Kerak Ware”), as well as, somewhat paradoxically, for competitive emulation. This resulted in contradictory impacts on the assemblages: the introduction of new components into local industries, and the spread of similar technological styles throughout the region. Examples of shared trends include the surface treatment of pithoi with lime-wash and combing and the increased diameter of platters and their decoration with a basket-like burnished pattern, which extend across the Levant, from north to south.

Elite articulation may have been the motivation for the acquisition or production of prestige objects. These include, in the ceramic realm, oversized vessels – platters, jugs, basins and pithoi – that allowed the expression of

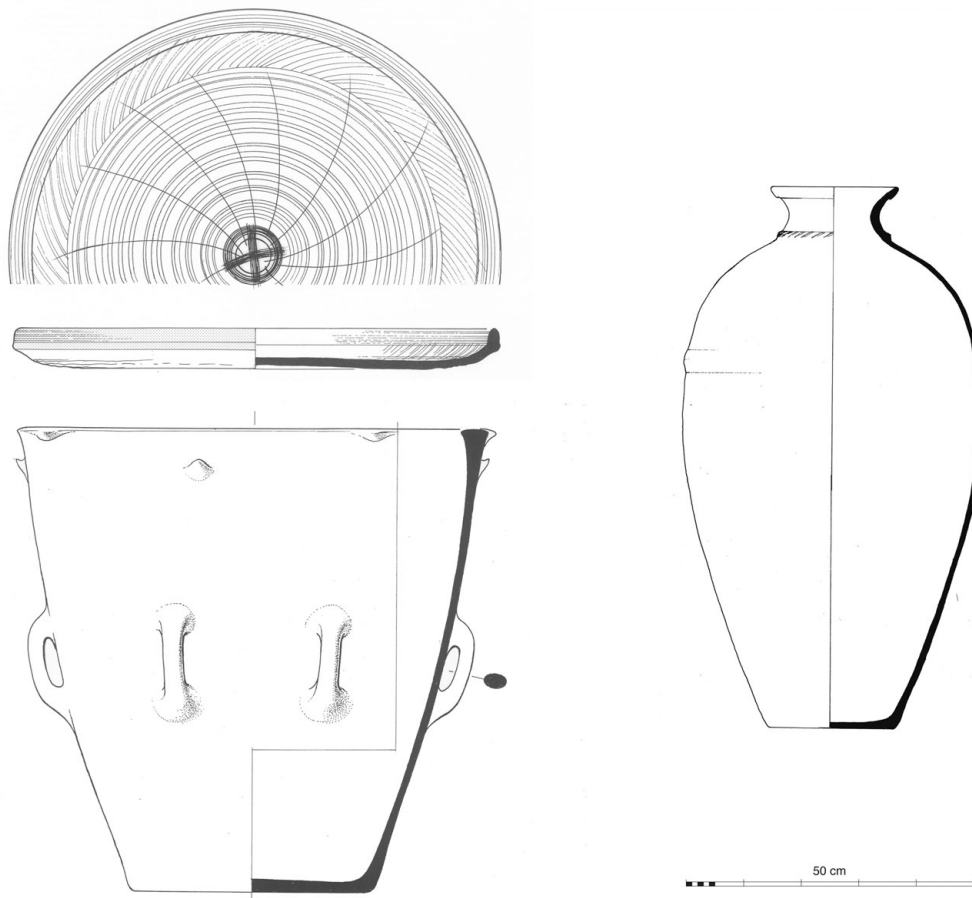


Figure 3.17 Large EB III platter, krater and pithos from Tel Yarmuth. Courtesy of P. de Miroschedji.

economic and social power through the storage of staple products and their redistribution in the form of feasts (Figure 3.17). The volume of EB III pithoi, more than 1 meter in height, nearly doubled that of the EB II, whereas platters with a diameter of 80 centimeters, not uncommon in the major EB III sites, allowed a six-fold increase in serving capacity when compared with the largest platters of the EB II. Prestige objects made of exotic materials and/or by skilled craftspeople remained rare. They include a small group of ivory bulls' heads, a few cosmetic items – ivory combs from 'Ai and Bet Yerah and decorated bone kohl-tubes – a handful of mace heads and a small number of metal objects, among which only the three-pronged axe is noteworthy.

Three hippopotamus ivory bulls' heads, from Jericho, 'Ai and Bet Yerah, similar in style, might have been produced by the same hand.¹⁰² Cavities and perforations indicate that they carried the following additions or inlays: horns, ears, eyes and a triangle on the forehead (Figure 3.18a). These additions were most likely made of precious materials (copper, lapis lazuli or gold). The head

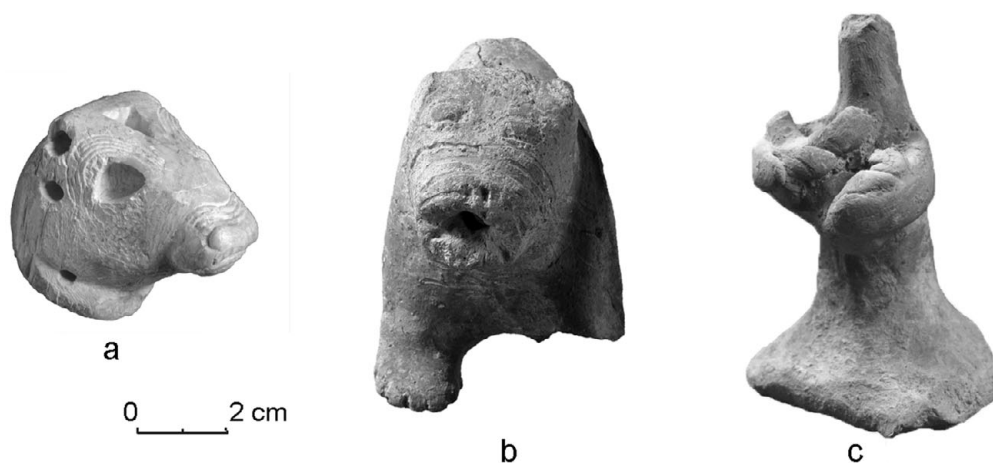


Figure 3.18 (a) Ivory bull's head, (b) lion-shaped vessel and (c) mother-and-child figurine from Tel Bet Yerah. Photos by P. Shrager, the Tel Bet Yerah Archaeological Project.

itself was originally affixed to a wooden object or haft. The heads therefore represent hybrid objects, composed of the ivory of a powerful, untamed creature combined with precious materials that together allude to the interaction of their owners with distant places and to their power within society. Since hippopotamus bones have been found in various EBA contexts in the southern Levant, including at Bet Yerah,¹⁰³ there is no reason to attribute the origin of the bulls' heads to distant lands. Nonetheless, several elements in the glyptic style, particularly the depiction of folds of skin and the central triangle, have affinities with Syro-Mesopotamian art of the third millennium, suggesting that south Levantine artisans still maintained some interaction with a broader West Asian tradition.¹⁰⁴

Decorated cattle-bone tubes are distributed widely in the Levant, one or two per site, from northern Syria to the southern Levantine coastal plain.¹⁰⁵ Presumably, they were intended for highly valued cosmetics. Since personal grooming and bodily adornment are one of the distinguishing characteristics of social elite, in emulation of the care devoted to royal and divine bodies, these tubes should be viewed in conjunction with a couple of ivory combs from 'Ai and Bet Yerah and with a small number of predynastic Egyptian palettes recirculated in the EB III Levant, as attempts to establish status by means of the elaboration of grooming habits.¹⁰⁶

A handful of stone and copper objects lie at the interface between the martial and the ceremonial. They include a small number of intact mace heads and three-tanged battle-axes, of which a grand total of three have been found in stratified contexts.¹⁰⁷ Sebbane, who has collated most of the known mace heads from the southern Levant, noted the appearance of several stone mace heads in the temple precincts of Megiddo and 'Ai.¹⁰⁸ Concentrations of intentionally fragmented stone mace heads were recorded at Bet Yerah, in

the refuse deposited north of the Circles Building during EB III, and at Kh. Umbashi in southwest Syria.¹⁰⁹ Their significance remains open to question. As for the meager EB III metal weaponry, although tin bronze had already been introduced in other parts of Western Asia, neither arsenical nor tin-bronze artifacts make their appearance in the third millennium central and southern Levant before 2500 BCE.

Simple symbolic objects include considerable numbers of clay animal figurines, which continue to be closely associated with the ceramic industry (i.e., their composition and firing matches that of the local ceramics). There appears to be an uptick in the number of bulls represented,¹¹⁰ while equid figurines seem to be in decline, with the notable exception of early EB III Zeraqun, which produced a class of axially perforated laden donkey figurines and donkey-and-rider figurines that are so far unique to this site.¹¹¹ Figurines that appear to show cultic furniture (beds, stools or tables) were still produced, but now the beds or stools could be topped with anthropomorphic figures. A nearly complete figurine of this type from Kh. ez-Zeraqun shows what appears to be an offering scene, with two figures (one male and the other broken) presenting a bull's head on a stand, all perched on a four-legged table.¹¹² A fragmentary temple model from Yarmuth showing a door flanked by human figures, a number of model fragments and painted plaques from Bet Yerah (one bearing a possible hunting scene), a mother-and-child figurine and a lion-shaped vessel, also from Bet Yerah (Figure 3.18b, c), round out a small, but increasingly diverse, corpus of local-tradition cult-related finds from the period (see, in addition, the discussion of KKW figurines, below).

While figurine production remained tied to the ceramic industry, the transition to EB III was marked by the disappearance of the glyptic school associated with South Levantine Metallic ware, a decline in the number of seal impressions on pots and an increase in the number of cylinder seals. Animal processions reappear on a small number of sealings in the south¹¹³ – perhaps impressed with reused EB I seals – and on jars of the northern coast found both in Lebanon and in Egypt,¹¹⁴ whereas the cylinder seals themselves, made of a wide variety of materials including ivory, alabaster and chlorite, bear highly variable designs, among which lion motifs (at Sidon, Safi and Fadous-Kfar-abida) and an apparent depiction of a smiting god (Fadous) stand out (Figure 3.19).¹¹⁵ With each seal differing from the others, and no evidence to show that they were ever applied to clay, it must be assumed that they were ornamental objects, distributed primarily in the northern and coastal region as part of the exchange of gifts and valuables among elites. The fragmentation of the Levantine glyptic art clearly reflects the dis-integration of EB III polities and the limited range of their authority (including the authority of royal estates like that excavated at Yarmuth).

This yield of prestige and cultic objects is, ultimately, a paltry one; rather than a reflection of the power of the elites, it is testimony to their relative



Figure 3.19 Cylinder seals and impressions from (a) Tell es-Safi (after Maeir, Shai and Horwitz 2011) and (b, c) Tell Fadous-Kfarabida. Courtesy of H. Genz.

weakness. Setting aside the enclave of Byblos and its immediate coastal periphery, they suggest narrowly circumscribed elites in the fortified centers, a frail network of interaction between towns, and only occasional dealings with nearby regions.

Peripheries at the Center: The Khirbet Kerak Phenomenon

During the twenty-ninth century BCE, in tandem with the transformations of the EB II urban system into the attenuated EB III landscape of isolated fortified centers, a number of Jordan and Jezreel Valley sites show a new presence, characterized by an alien material-culture package that contrasts sharply with local traditions. The centerpiece of this “package” is the so-called Khirbet Kerak ware, a ceramic assemblage characterized by strong color contrasts, a high luster and prominent tactile qualities that immediately establishes a sensory boundary between itself and local traditions (Figure 3.20). The ware was first identified as such by W.F. Albright at the type-site of Khirbet el-Kerak (Tel Bet Yerah), and the excavated sites in which it is most abundant are Hazor, Tel Bet Yerah, Afula, Tel Qishyon, Tell esh-Shuna, Tel Yaqush and Tel Bet Shean, although small quantities of the ware have been found at sites across the Levant.¹¹⁶ The core sites noted above fall into two categories: those in which KKW was added to and existed alongside a local pottery repertoire (Bet Yerah, Hazor, Qishyon), and those in which the KKW largely replaces the local component, either immediately (Shuna) or following a brief phase of coexistence (Yaqush, Bet Shean). At some sites, there are five or six phases associated with the ware (Bet Shean, Bet Yerah); at others, one or two (Hazor, Yaqush). It may thus be assumed that following the initial introduction of the ware – and of the people who produced and consumed it – KKW-rich sites followed different trajectories until production ceased. Because the craftsmanship, sensorial properties and functions of the pots are so clearly marked, as are the cooking installations, stone artifacts and other materials of “KKW people,” they can be clearly distinguished as a community of practice that

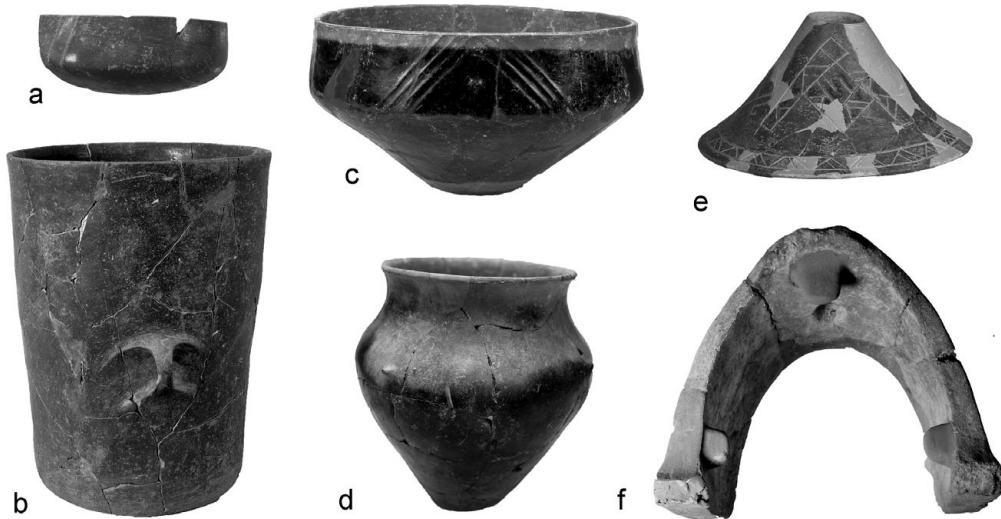


Figure 3.20 Khirbet Kerak ware from Tel Bet Yerah: (a) bowl, (b) jar, (c, d) kraters, (e) decorated lid and (f) andiron. Scale approximately 1:10. Photos by P. Shrago, Tel Bet Yerah Archaeological Project.

created its own cultural environment, encompassing aspects of materiality, consumption and performance (see box on “Khirbet Kerak People’ as Migrant Communities”).

Where KKW is introduced into an extant site, there tends to be segregation between KKW-rich and KKW-poor contexts.¹¹⁷ In the earliest stratigraphic phases, KKW-rich deposits cover previously open or abandoned lots as well as disused public structures, suggesting temporary construction within a partly abandoned settlement. This is particularly noticeable in the so-called Granary (Circles Building) at Tel Bet Yerah – the 1,000-square-meter public building of the early EB III that was completely given over to a KKW squat within a short time of its construction.¹¹⁸ Contemporary houses that show continuity with EB II have little or no KKW in them. When KKW producers/consumers arrived at smaller sites in the Jordan Valley, a first phase of coexistence of KKW and the local tradition, similar to that of the larger sites, was followed by a second phase in which the quantity and diversity of local EBA wares was severely diminished.¹¹⁹

The Khirbet Kerak ceramic assemblage is completely distinct from local Levantine traditions both in its technology – entirely hand-produced vessels with intensive surface treatment consisting of a thick, polished slip – and in its forms. It covers most domestic functions related to food preparation and presentation (bowls, kraters, cups and stands) but does not include cooking pots or large storage vessels. Cooking was performed in whichever pots were locally available, placed on a traditional Kura-Araxes pot support (andiron; Figure 3.20f) and covered by a peculiar, conical lid with a

prominent button handle. Some of the vessels – most commonly the kraters (Figure 3.20c, d) and S-profiled cups and mugs – were fired under alternating reducing and oxidizing conditions in order to produce the characteristic red-black pattern shared throughout most of the Kura–Araxes expanse. Many of them bear burnished relief decoration in geometric patterns or simple incised linear patterns that occasionally take the form of birds or horned animals.

Despite the know-how invested in their production, KKW vessels show no standardization; the potters may even be said to have resisted standardization (or simplification) in their consistent rejection of wheel-coiling, their use of readily available soils, and their adherence to labor-intensive formation techniques. Thus, in contrast to local specializing industries, where access to both raw materials and technical knowledge was restricted to the workshop, KKW appears to follow the “learning network” model of knowledge transmission, that is, variation within a recognizable tradition created by daily reproduction in contexts of informal instruction. In this model, information moves both vertically in society, from old to young, and horizontally, through social contact of age peers.¹²⁰

Typologically, KKW bowls and kraters comprised a functional replacement to local mixing and serving vessels (for liquids and solids), whereas the KKW cooking ensemble – a local-style cooking pot placed on a KKW andiron and covered with a distinctive KKW lid – co-opted a local cooking vessel into KKW practice, presumably in the service of a distinctive cuisine. Recent work on the composition of consumed plant and meat products has begun to tease out the differences between local-traditional and incoming groups, indicating that the newcomers may have had less access to good cuts of meat and a preference for wheat products over leguminous dishes.¹²¹ The covered cooking ensemble seems best suited for stews, which would be the best way to extract flavor and nutrition from the less-meaty animal parts. When these were served, the shape and asymmetry of the KKW vessels required a *technique du corps* for the daily routines of food consumption that differed markedly from those prescribed by local tradition. A prime example is the contrast between the ubiquitous large serving platter and coarse bowls used as the main serving vessels in the local tradition, and the deep KKW kraters and fine-ware bowls and goblets. The former, as we have already noted, seem to have played a role in communal meals; they were presumably piled high with roasted meat, piles of lentils and cracked wheat or loaves of bread, and placed at the center of the dining area, requiring an etiquette of precedence among those assembled around them. The latter would have formed part of a different sequence of actions, beginning with the slow cooking of the stews and the preparation of beverages (beer or mulled wine) in the large kraters, followed by doling out individual portions to various family members in their appropriately sized red-slipped bowls and two-toned mugs.

The production of isolated examples of KKW at sites situated more than 100 kilometers from the core area of production – such as Tel ‘Erani and Tell Najila in the southern coastal plain – has been explained as the work of itinerant potters.¹²² This seems unlikely, as the products – usually fine-ware bowls – had local functional equivalents, and one can hardly imagine that a potter would have traveled for days only for such a purpose. It is more likely that the very act of creation was a culturally significant activity, a statement of identity through technology. Thus, the production of KKW should not be viewed as an industry at all, in the sense that applies to local EBA production. Both the creation and the use of the pot required a set of prescribed actions and movements that served as a mode of performative commemoration, linking the owner of even a single vessel to the community of origin.

KKW ceramics are joined by additional artifacts that set them apart from the local tradition, including cattle figurines made in a style comparable to that of figurines from Kura–Araxes sites of the Upper Euphrates, model cart wheels, and miniature vessels that reproduce the details of the full-sized ones (Figure 3.21). The miniaturization of ceramics, cattle, and, apparently, carts – here making their first appearance in the southern Levant – points to values that “KKW people” must have seen as central to their identity and that could be preserved and inculcated by means of the manipulation of miniature artifacts (as teaching devices or as mimetic displays): their foodways, their craft, their cattle and their mode of transportation.¹²³

At Tel Bet Yerah, there are clear signs of the attenuation of the original diacritical role of the assemblage. In the latest stratigraphic phases, the segregation between KKW-rich and KKW-poor households is no longer evident; the ware is spread more evenly – and hence thinly – across the site. Eventually, KKW became one of a variety of ways in which EB III persons could

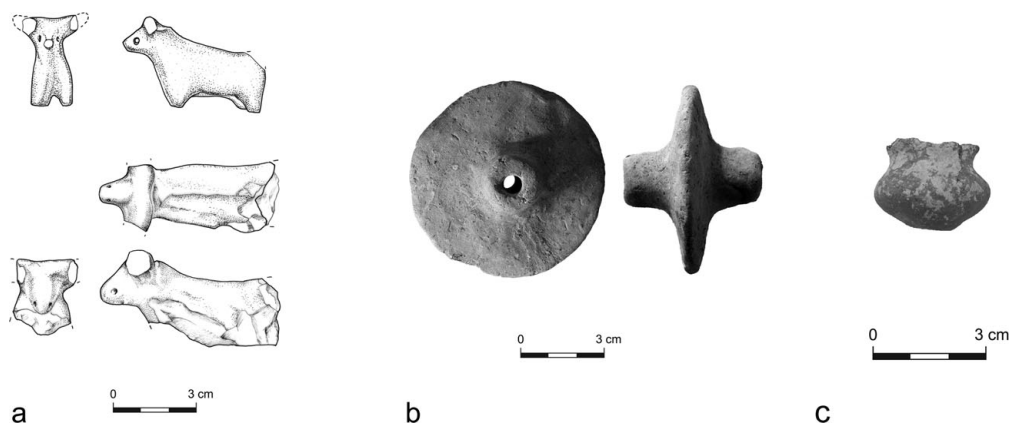


Figure 3.21 Khirbet Kerak ware: (a) figurines, (b) wheel model and (c) miniature bowl. Photos by P. Shrager and the author. Tel Bet Yerah Archaeological Project.

communicate status, diversity or mere individual preference. KKW did not survive the dissolution of urban life at the end of EB III. It is not in evidence at any of the southern Levant sites associated with the post-urban Intermediate Bronze Age (IBA), nor is there any residue of the values associated with KKW in the material culture of the IBA. Thus, although the KKW phenomenon is not in itself strongly correlated with urban living – in its aversion to commoditization, in the absence of an architectural tradition and in its focus on the domestic unit – it is nonetheless a feature of the urban EBA southern Levant.

“Khirbet Kerak People” as Migrant Communities

The origin of the KKW producing/consuming groups is betrayed by their cultural assemblage. Until recently, this assemblage was characterized entirely by its ceramics. It has, however, become increasingly clear that KKW pots were accompanied by additional components: the intensive use of open spaces for crafts, butchering, cooking, and refuse disposal, accompanied by the periodic sealing of these spaces with layers of clay or tamped earth, a tendency to use polished mud and clay floors and installations, a characteristic radial production technique for flake tools, particular figurine forms and andiron decorations, and distinct consumption and discard patterns.¹²⁴ All or most of these components and traditions are shared with sites associated with the Kura–Araxes cultural community, which extend in a broad arc from the Iranian plateau, across the southern Caucasus, and down to the Upper Euphrates Valley and the Levant.¹²⁵ Originating in the mid-fourth millennium in the central part of this arc, the Kura and Aras river basins, Kura–Araxes sites were for the most part small village communities which began, in the late fourth and early third millennium, to appear in areas well outside their zone of origin, in the wake of processes that are still poorly understood. The “Khirbet Kerak” variant, which extends, in several isolated clusters of sites, from the Amuq Valley in the northern Levant to the Jordan and Jezreel Valleys, is widely viewed as a diasporic migrant community with immediate antecedents in southeast Anatolia, although this view is not consensual.¹²⁶

Mark Iserlis’s detailed comparative technological study of Kura–Araxes industries and their counterparts in the Levant has shown that KKW production operated under the same set of rules and sequence of operations that governed ceramic production throughout the Kura–Araxes cultural community.¹²⁷ In Levantine sites, KKW differs fundamentally from local practice in the choice of raw materials (usually local soils) and inclusions (often including grog and organics), formation techniques (especially the resistance to wheel manufacture), surface treatment (thick slip and burnish) and decoration (incised or embossed), and firing (red and black coloration achieved through oxidation/reduction). When the prescribed sequence of actions was rigorously followed, which was the norm, it led to a consistently high-quality finish, easily distinguished from local production.

The color of the vessels appears to be informed by cultural negotiation. Since red slip was a very common feature of local pottery in the Levant, its widespread use for some KKW forms – particularly the ubiquitous vertical-sided bowl – may be

seen as an adaptation to local preference, while the retention of the red-black scheme for other vessels references non-local origins. In this manner, an element of conciliation with local culture is introduced into Kura-Araxes practice, and with it a recognition of the distance traveled from its place of origin.¹²⁸

Various attempts have been made to account for the movement of Kura-Araxes communities – or parts of them – into the Levant. Long thought to be pastoral nomads or itinerant potters, new studies on the economy of the homeland sites has established the sedentary, agricultural base of most Kura-Araxes communities. Current studies therefore focus on the ability of Kura-Araxes networks to transmit technological innovations or precious metals from the northern peripheries toward urbanized centers, while maintaining an alternate way of life in autonomous communities.¹²⁹ A promising angle seems to be the inverse relation between KKW-related settlement and strong urbanizing paradigms: Kura-Araxes communities appear in, or move into, southeast Anatolia and the Amuq region in the wake of Uruk withdrawal, while in the Levant they avoid the flourishing Byblos enclave while exploiting weakened Jordan Valley sites. And although the northern connection with metalliferous and vine-growing regions has attracted explanations related to metal- and wine-making,¹³⁰ the principal technological advantage that can be identified on the ground relates to ceramic crafts and to the traction complex: oxen, carts and probably plows.¹³¹ In other words, mobile communities with a Kura-Araxes cultural orientation moved in where opportunity arose, and survived as autonomous communities by fulfilling important functions, for example, as cattle drivers, and by showcasing an exotic cultural assemblage in an age when social articulation began to reassert itself following the decline of EB II uniformitarian propensities.

Interactions: Towns, Peripheries, and the Byblos Enclave

In most parts of the EB III Levant, the centuries-long pattern of abandonments and resettlements created a landscape of insular fortified centers located on hills or artificial mounds, with extensive tracts of sparsely populated land between them. These tracts are unlikely to have been devoid of settlement; rather, they must have been frequented by seasonal agricultural laborers and by groups who preferred to stay away from the fortified centers after the abandonment of the EB II villages in the valleys and in the hills of Samaria, Galilee, Central Transjordan and the Golan/Hauran. These would have been mobile groups engaging in pastoralism, seasonal agriculture, trade in raw materials or the occasional exotica, and in other traditional pursuits of people at the margins of settled society. Archaeological evidence for their existence is not prominent, but is alluded to in several ways.

In surveys conducted in areas of permanent settlement, such as the Moab plateau in the east and the Judean lowlands in the west, scores of sites have been broadly attributed to “EB II–III.” Only a minority of these sites can be

characterized as built-up EBA settlement sites, and the rest consist of sherds-scatters. It seems likely that some of them represent pastoralist campsites or seasonal occupation by field laborers from nearby towns (similar to the Palestinian *‘izbeh* of later times). Another possible marker of non-urban presence is the distribution of above-ground burial markers – megalithic graves, grave circles and cairns – especially in areas that became marginal only in EB III, such as the Golan and Hula Valley. Few burial structures have been excavated, and fewer still have yielded finds, but one of the few excavated cemeteries of this type – the tumulus field of Ramat Hanadiv in the southern Carmel range – appears to straddle the EB III and Intermediate Bronze ages.¹³² In view of the absence of cemeteries near most of the large EB III towns and the prevalence of above-ground burial in pastoralist societies,¹³³ at least some of the many burial monuments in the Galilee, Negev and Transjordanian highlands should be attributed to EB III non-urban populations.

Evidence of a different kind for non-urban existence is offered by copper mining and processing sites in the Arabah valley. Within the extended sequence of copper mining sites in Wadi Feinan, the site of Khirbet Hamra Ifdan stands out.¹³⁴ Excavation revealed evidence for primary and secondary production activities, radiometrically dated to the mid-third millennium BCE. Thousands of metal-related objects and some 100 kilograms of copper waste were recovered at the site; these were the residue of smelting, refining, recycling and casting of copper ingots and artifacts. Casting molds show that copper left the site in three main forms: crescent-shaped ingots, axe-shaped ingots, and slender cylindrical pins (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.12). The discovery of crescent ingots in a number of settlements in the Negev that are traditionally dated to the IBA points to the possibility that these sites – Be’er Resisim, ‘En Ziq and others (see Chapter 4 for detailed descriptions of these sites) – were first inhabited in EB III by people engaged either in production or in mediating between the producers and their urban consumers, further to the north.¹³⁵

The picture emerging from the assembled settlement and material evidence regarding EB III is of a poorly integrated collection of fortified centers or citadels with unstable settlement histories, governed by leading individuals or families (“elites”), each striving to survive on its own by amassing staple products, building monumental structures, and maintaining control of limited agricultural territory. Between the fortified centers is a thin matrix of mobile groups that could either mediate between the centers, form a barrier between them, or even threaten them. Insofar as they mediated and promoted contact, these groups could facilitate trade in small volumes and assist in the spread of ideas and technologies. If hostile, such groups could isolate the fortified settlements and degrade their economic base. This configuration might help explain the instability of EB III urbanism, the partial or complete abandonment of many sites throughout the period and, ultimately, the circumstances leading to their final demise in the twenty-fifth century BCE.

Maritime trade with Egypt may have been a difference-maker for sites on the northern Lebanese coast, Byblos, Fadous and probably Arqa and Sidon as well, setting them on a trajectory that diverged from other parts of the Levant. Just as the inland towns were entering a decline, those of the Byblos enclave reached the zenith of their third-millennium development, a peak that outlasted the end of the south Levantine EB III and continued into the Lebanese EB IV, or the south Levantine Intermediate Bronze Age. Contact with Egypt is represented by references in Old Kingdom texts, beginning with the annals of the Fourth Dynasty king Sneferu, to the acquisition of large quantities of cedar wood, used for the construction of what came to be known as “Byblos ships”; by combed Levantine jars found in Fourth to Sixth Dynasty contexts in Egypt, all of which should be attributed to North Levantine Metallic ware workshops producing vessels designed specifically for the sea trade; and by numerous inscribed objects bearing royal names of the Fourth to Sixth Dynasties found in Byblos itself (the objects were found in mixed contexts, but are generally thought to have been deposited in the Baalat Gebal temple, the temple of the local patron goddess, who was apparently also identified with the Egyptian goddess Hathor, Lady of Byblos).¹³⁶

On the ground, mid-third-millennium strata at Byblos, Fadous-Kfarabida and Arqa all testify to prosperity, with or without direct evidence for trade. Byblos itself (according to M. Saghie) ¹³⁷ was first fortified and furnished with two massive gates in the EB III, and the first in a long series of temples seem to have been built around the sacred well that lay in the heart of the city. These temples included the first structure – Building XVIII – in what was to become the Ba’alat Gebal complex. This was followed, in EB IVA, by the Hypostyle Temple that replaced Building XVIII, and by Temple XIII and the L-shaped Temple in EB IVB, which was eventually to become the Obelisk Temple of the second millennium. Dense residential areas girded the central sacred complex, but the presumed palace area was badly damaged by later construction. Tell Fadous-Kfaradiba was also massively fortified in EB III, and furnished with a gate approached by a flight of stairs, similar to those of Byblos.¹³⁸ Excavations revealed several houses attributed to affluent owners (Figure 3.22): in addition to ample evidence for agricultural processing and storage, a small bone scale beam found in one of the houses testifies to trade in precious commodities; in another house, several cylinder seals were found (see Figure 3.19). In late EB III, the settlement was dominated by two large, well-built, two-storied buildings – one multi-roomed and one comprised of a large pillared hall on its basement floor – that are interpreted as administrative structures. Finds in these buildings included an Egyptian bowl and decorated bone cosmetic containers, as well as several additional cylinder seals in a local or western Syrian style. This phase appears to have ended with the abandonment of the site, well before the end of the third millennium.

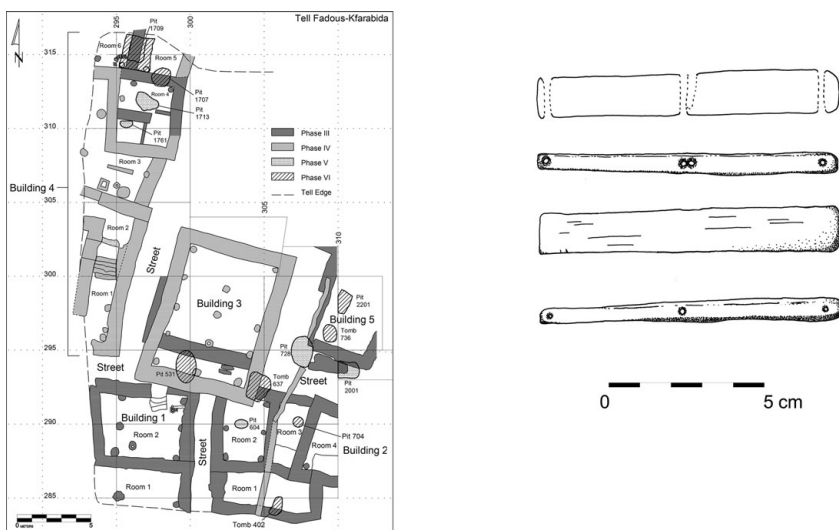


Figure 3.22 Plan of Early Bronze III structures at Tell Fadous-Kfarabida; at right, a bone scale beam. Courtesy of Hermann Genz.

Tell Arqa provides a remarkable, 8-meter-deep stratified sequence for EB III and IV, spanning four major strata (Strata 18–15, with subphases).¹³⁹ Where broadly exposed, from the mid-EB III onward, the Arqa sequence is characterized by dense domestic construction accessed by means of radial and peripheral streets and alleys. Houses were well built, with stone foundations and mudbrick superstructures; numerous pillar bases along the walls of the houses testify to extensive use of timber in house construction, as is characteristic of all the Lebanese coastal sites (these timbers were preserved in the Stratum 17 destruction layer). In the later strata, the ground floors of the houses were used for storage of great quantities of grain. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Arqa's EBA material culture is the rich ceramic record, stretching from late EB II to the end of EB IV, ca. 2000 BCE. In this sequence, the gradual evolution of the North Levantine Metallic ware tradition can be seen, as it moves away from forms and techniques shared with the South Levantine variant, while maintaining a similar composition of raw materials and the high firing that gave Levantine Metallic wares their functional edge (Figure 3.23). Recent mineralogical studies confirm the eye test regarding the North Levantine origin of many of the imported vessels in Old Kingdom tombs,¹⁴⁰ yet no Egyptian artifacts were recorded at Arqa, suggesting a Byblite monopoly on the direct interaction with agents of the Egyptian court.

The End of EB III: The Expanding Syrian Periphery

As stated earlier, most EB III sites did not survive from beginning to end of the period. Nonetheless, during the final century of EB III, that is, by about 2400 BCE, all the surviving fortified centers – with the notable exception of the

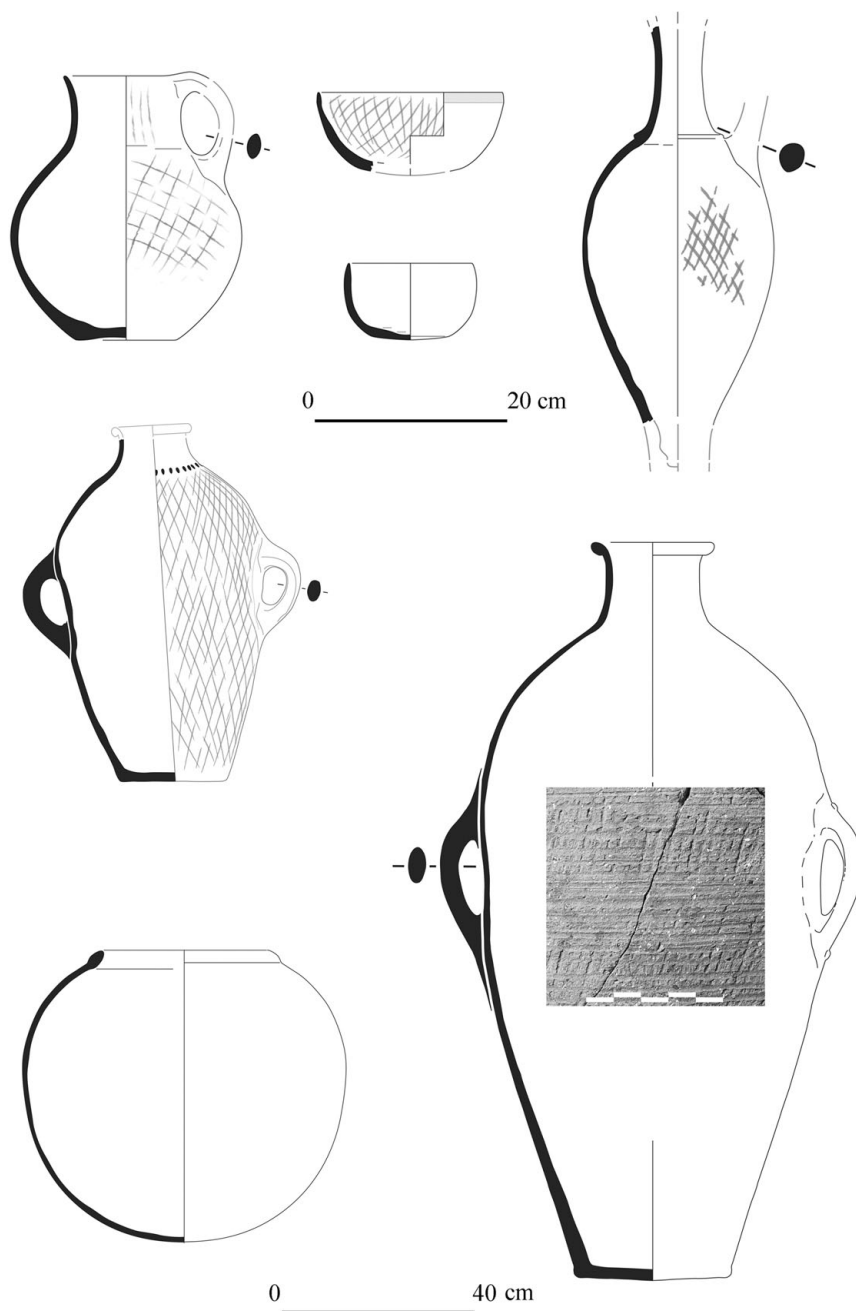


Figure 3.23 Early Bronze III pottery from Tell Arqa. Courtesy of J.-P. Thalmann.

Byblos enclave – were irrevocably abandoned. Places like Megiddo, Jericho, Tel Bet Yerah, Tel Yarmuth or Tell es-Sakan, which had been repeatedly rebuilt and renovated over hundreds of years, were deserted and fell into ruin, for centuries, for millennia or for good. This process is generally termed “systemic

urban collapse,” but as I have been trying to demonstrate in the preceding sections, the fortified centers of the EB III are only marginally urban, and they cannot be said to represent a system. These were virtually autonomous polities comprised of an elite stratum, occasionally demonstrating considerable power and wealth, a small subject population, and additional mobile groups who maintained a loose affiliation with the town. The existence of these centers depended on the willingness of all three groups to come together periodically and participate in shared ceremonial gatherings (in temple compounds like those at Megiddo and Zeraqun), or to contribute to communal construction projects that established the towns’ identity and enhanced their symbolic capital. Such willingness was dependent on the social credit held by the elite – that is, its legitimacy, which, in turn, would have depended on its control of economic resources and its ability to manage relations with other polities and with the intervening non-urban groups (the threat of violent sanctions being quite limited). Clearly, once the non-urban environment turned hostile, the town’s days were numbered: its agricultural land would be vulnerable, it would be denied the meat and milk products provided by mobile pastoralists, and it would lose its access to metals and other materials.

Evidence for both urban desolation and a weak infrastructure exists before 2500 BCE. For example, Kh. ez-Zeraqun – one of the finest examples of developed Levantine urbanism – progressively withdrew into its shell, with ramped-up defenses, blocked gates, and a deserted extra-mural marketplace, until it was finally abandoned, well before most other towns. Not all towns show the same sequence, but at the midpoint of the millennium, processes external to the south and central Levant tipped the scales decisively against their continued survival. At the center of the vortex lay the meteoric rise of kingdom of Ebla and the rapid urbanization of northern Syria, attested both archaeologically and in the trove of cuneiform documents found at Ebla’s Palace G and in additional sites within Ebla’s purview.¹⁴¹ A vast textile industry formed the basis for Ebla’s wealth and power, requiring a supply of wool derived from many hundreds of thousands of sheep. Tony Wilkinson and his collaborators offered a broad model for third millennium BCE changes in “zones of uncertainty” surrounding the fertile dry-farming regions of northern Syria that could have included both the construction of new settlements and towns in the Syrian desert margins and the economic reorientation of more distant parts of the Levant:

The EB IV agro-pastoral communities of the southern Levant may, at least peripherally, have been involved in the resourcing or seasonal management of the vast animal herds that occupied the rangelands of the Syrian steppe in EB IV... In the absence of significant southern power centres during EB IV, such a process would presumably reflect the gradual reorientation of communities in the southern Levant towards a northern sphere, through the opportunities offered by this new and physically distant core.¹⁴²

The impact of Syria on the IBA (EB IV) culture of the central and southern Levant has long been recognized.¹⁴³ It can now be suggested that this impact was not merely “cultural,” but part of a broad social and economic reorientation. Whether the fruit of direct contact or facilitated by intermediaries (such as the pre-existing mobile pastoralists), the economic boom of northern Syria offered an attractive, even lucrative, alternative to the old citadel towns. It would also have offered new paths to prosperity and prestige, no longer linked to the old order, but to a new, physically and socially mobile one. With only the town walls intervening between the inhabitants of the towns and their non-urban neighbors (and, presumably, kinsfolk), the path to change was not a particularly long or difficult one. They walked away from the towns – from their massive walls, their congestion and their elites – and didn’t look back.

CONCLUSION: THE FIRST URBAN CYCLE IN THE LEVANT

Some 1,300 years passed between the establishment of the first EBA villages and the abandonment of the last surviving EBA towns – a long stretch of time, nearly equal in duration to the Middle Bronze, Late Bronze and Iron Ages combined. Even accepting that historical time is not measured linearly, it is clear that such a long span encompasses far-reaching social change, economic development, technological innovations and new concepts of what it means to be human, and that these transformations impacted the continued evolution of Levantine societies. The Levant was never completely isolated; it must have been affected by the spirit of the times exemplified by urbanized, expanding Uruk and the emerging Egyptian state. But the response to and interpretation of the winds of change by the village societies of the Levant was far from straightforward. The principle innovation at the start of the Levantine EBA resembles what has elsewhere been termed “the evolution of simplicity,” but where such evolutions usually accompany the emergence of hierarchical societies, the early Levantine version took an egalitarian turn, spurning the elaborate iconography and accumulation of symbolic capital – especially as seen in mortuary settings – that characterized the Ghassulian Chalcolithic. At its inception, the EBA was characterized by the absence of status marking and an emphasis on a Mediterranean staple goods economy marked by the introduction of the animal-drawn plow. Only at the start of EB IB do the first instances of centralization appear at sites like Erani and Megiddo, accompanied by the accumulation of wealth in certain households, indicating the emergence of social stratification in what was essentially still a village society. The internal negotiation in Levantine society takes an interesting turn in the wake of the Egyptian incursion in late EB I (it is important to keep in mind that it was preceded by limited and apparently peaceful Levantine interventions in the Egyptian delta, at sites like el-Ma’adi). This early colonial encounter raises a raft of interesting questions about the degree of reciprocity in asymmetric

relations, about cultural interference and about the relation between violence, exchange and trade. What did West Asians and Northeast Africans learn from each other? Does the evidence support a scenario of “occupation” and “resistance”? Is it permissible to define ethnicity through material culture? What might have been the impact of the (apparently sudden) Egyptian withdrawal? Whatever the answers are, this first Egyptian–Levantine interaction should be seen as a precursor to repeated instances of Egyptian incursion into Asia, as well as Levantine migration to Egypt, along the North Sinai coast.

The urban transformation of EB II epitomizes a total societal makeover with no clear external cause. Villages were abandoned and destroyed, to be replaced by aggregated, fortified and – in some cases – systematically laid out centers that testify to the adoption of parts of the urban concepts that accompanied the Uruk expansion, loosely translated into a local Levantine idiom. Stratigraphic and chronological considerations intimate that the replacement of a dispersed village landscape by a relatively integrated urban-like system happened within the span of a single generation, and that not a few persons who were born in villages died in towns that had not even existed before (relinquishing, among other things, their ancestral burial grounds, i.e., part of their former identity). The components of EB II society were all based on EB I antecedents, reconfigured: beginning with fortifications, through construction techniques on to ceramics, there is hardly a thing in EB II that does not have its origins in EB I. Nevertheless, conceptual and organizational changes in EB II reposition these components, constrain the range of authorized variation, and pattern their reproduction and hierarchical order.

There is an ongoing debate regarding EB II urbanism, which is little more than a local version of the age-old archaeological debate between diffusionists, who trace innovations to a unique source and follow its spread from that source, and champions of parallel evolution or multiple-source innovation, who favor independent development of similar traits due to determining factors such as biology, environment or human cognitive hard-wiring; these factors combine to produce similar reactions to external conditions, without any contact between societies needed. Both viewpoints have long and scientifically bona-fide genealogies in archaeological thought. Traditional, and especially Continental, approaches in Levantine archaeology have tended historically toward the former viewpoint, seeing Levantine urbanism as a watered-down version, or distant echo, of either Mesopotamian urbanism or Egyptian state formation.¹⁴⁴ Anthropologically oriented approaches, especially favored in Anglo-American archaeology, have tended toward the latter viewpoint, suggesting that Levantine social complexity not only was a local development, but that it was not properly urban at all.¹⁴⁵

Having already placed Levantine developments in relation to both Mesopotamian and Egyptian political processes, and having referred to Wengrow’s

emphasis on the constant flow of ideas and materials in the ancient world that was responsible for these developments, including Egyptian technological borrowing from the Levant itself, it would be odd to isolate the Levant from the same flow of ideas and materials. The design of towns as planned, fortified settlements; the production of branded, widely distributed commodities; the suspension of cemetery burial; and the promotion of uniformity and simplicity – these are all too similar to Urukian concepts of urbanism and too contrived to be defined a necessary, local evolution. In fact, they were rejected and completely transformed within a brief span of time. Yet even so, the polity created in EB II – an incipient state of sorts, but lacking any real administrative infrastructure – has a quality that is entirely local, defined as well by what was not adopted from the original, whether Mesopotamian or Egyptian. And what was bleached out, above all, was the element of sacred kingship – that is, the cosmic, mythic and cultic union of the king, the city or state, and the gods. In the EB II towns of the Levant, the marginal role of temples, on the one hand, and the devaluation of mortuary rituals, on the other, creates something that is different fundamentally from the Mesopotamian city-state or the Egyptian kingdom. In this sense, Levantine urbanism is a local development, certainly not imposed by outside forces, and as such it may be seen as prototypical of more highly integrated structures of the second millennium, and even of the first millennium BCE. Those systems, as well, feature wide regional uniformities, a dearth of royal or religious iconography, and little evidence of social stratification. The EB II system, however, was an innovation, and shows signs of experimentation in new social structuration based on “weak” ties¹⁴⁶ and shared ideologies that are the basis for urban life.

The entropic tendencies of EB III, which testify to a tendency to dissolve complex structures owing to the high price of their maintenance, took the form that they did in the wake of their engagement with a more formal urbanism; as such, they form a precedent for recurrent processes of political disintegration that characterized subsequent periods. EB II and III present, therefore, two urbanizing models – the one more integrative and communal in outlook and the other more centralized and less integrative – that were to compete over a long span of time. If the latter is viewed as a reaction to the first – an attempt by elites to overcome levelling mechanisms imposed by the ordering principles of the first experiment in urbanism, then EB III developments such as the construction of mortuary monuments in areas outside the control of the fortified centers or the influx of non-urban migrants into towns may be seen as a form of resistance to centralized, coercive economies. Indeed, the “Khirbet Kerak people,” who offered a model founded on household production and on a kin-based horizontal social structure, represent a non-urban option, often within the cities themselves. Moreover, the option they offered of resisting state-based identities through the establishment of family- and community-based cultural and technological networks was one that

remained embedded in Levantine society as a powerful, if often submerged, structuring principle.

These models affected the non-urban settlement landscape, which expanded, contracted and changed its role in concert with developments in the urban centers. The southern Levant was, therefore, with the waning of EB III, post-urban, and could never return to its pre-urban state.

NOTES

- 1 Fischer 2000; 2014; Regev, de Miroschedji and Boaretto 2012; Bourke 2014; Regev et al. 2014; 2017.
- 2 Kantor 1992; Adams and Porat 1996; Müller 2014.
- 3 Greenberg and Eisenberg 2002; Greenberg, Wengrow and Paz 2010.
- 4 Dee et al. 2013.
- 5 Köhler and Thalmann 2014.
- 6 Genz 2014.
- 7 Greenberg and Porat 1996 and see below.
- 8 Marfoe 1995; 1998; al-Maqdissi and Braemer 2006; Braemer and al-Maqdissi 2008; Fiaccavento 2013.
- 9 Hartal 1989; Frankel et al. 2001; Greenberg 2002.
- 10 Esse 1991; Finkelstein et al. 2006.
- 11 Gophna and Portugali 1988; Finkelstein and Gophna 1993; Zertal 1993; Gophna 1996: 153–162; Savage, Harrison and Falconer 2007; see also Harrison 1997.
- 12 Beit-Arieh 1981; 2003; Haiman 1991; Rosen 2011.
- 13 Yekutieli 2009.
- 14 Fischer 1997; Berger 2013.
- 15 Faust and Golani 2008.
- 16 Hesse and Wapnish 1991: 28–30; 2001; Horwitz 2003; Berger 2018.
- 17 A.M. Rosen 1995; Faust and Ashkenazy 2009.
- 18 Johnson 1982; Kosse 1990; 2000; Feinman 2013.
- 19 Amiran and Ilan 1992; Braun 1996; Gophna 1996; Ben-Tor, Bonfil and Zuckerman 2003; Paz and Paz 2007; Douglas 2011.
- 20 De Vaux 1962; Paz and Paz 2007.
- 21 Greenberg and Paz 2005; Greenberg et al. 2017.
- 22 De Miroschedji 1990; 2013.
- 23 Amiran and Ilan 1992.
- 24 Finkelstein 1990; Herzog 1997.
- 25 Sowada 2009: 45; Milevski 2011.
- 26 De Miroschedji 1993; Herzog 1997.
- 27 Greenberg and Paz 2014; Paz and Greenberg 2016.
- 28 Golani 2003; 2013; 2014a, b; Faust and Golani 2008.

- 29 Cf. Chesson 2003.
- 30 O. Ilan 2001.
- 31 Paz 2012.
- 32 Golani 2003; Paz 2012; Greenberg and Paz 2014.
- 33 Amiran and Ilan 1992; 1996.
- 34 Finkelstein 1990; Herzog 1997.
- 35 Amiran 1978: pl. 166.
- 36 Amiran 1972; Schroer and Keel 2005; de Miroschedji 2011.
- 37 Sebbane 2001.
- 38 Tubb 1998; Douglas 2011.
- 39 Beck 1985; Porat 1989; Greenberg and Porat 1996; Paz and Iserlis 2009.
- 40 Greenberg and Porat 1996.
- 41 Hartal 1989; Esse 1991; Frankel et al. 2001; Greenberg 2002; al-Maqdissi and Braemer 2006.
- 42 Hennessy 1967; Kantor 1992.
- 43 Greenberg and Iserlis 2014.
- 44 Goren and Porat 1989; Porat 1989; Milevski 2011: 58–64.
- 45 Milevski 2011: 58.
- 46 Paz and Iserlis 2009; Greenberg and Iserlis 2014.
- 47 Feinman and Garraty 2010; Garraty and Stark 2010.
- 48 Ilan and Sebbane 1989.
- 49 Shimelmitz, Barkai and Gopher 2000.
- 50 Anderson, Chabot and van Gijn 2004; Shimelmitz 2009; Groman-Yaroslavski, Iserlis and Eisenberg 2013.
- 51 Yekutieli 2009; the site of Barqa al-Hatiya in the Feinan region, which produced a late EB II ceramic assemblage and remains of copper slag, is a plausible terminus for this route. See Fritz 1994; Adams 2003.
- 52 Adams and Porat 1996; Müller 2014; Iserlis, Steiniger and Greenberg 2019.
- 53 Bevan 2014; Knapp and Demesticha 2016.
- 54 Beck 1976; Ben-Tor 1978; Greenberg 2001b; Joffe 2001.
- 55 De Miroschedji 2011.
- 56 Amiran 1985; Milevski 2011.
- 57 Bradbury and Philip 2017.
- 58 Mazar, Amiran and Haas 1973.
- 59 Guigues 1937; Greenberg 2001a; Smithline 2001.
- 60 De Vaux and Steve 1949; Rotem 2015; Yannai 2016.
- 61 Kenyon 1960.
- 62 Schaub and Rast 1989; Chesson 1999.
- 63 Haiman 1991; 1993; see, however, Saidel 2017, who suggests an “Early Timnian” (Neolithic) date for these structures.
- 64 Zertal 1993.

- 65 De Miroschedji 1989a, b; Joffe 1993; Herzog 1997; Greenberg 2002; Chesson and Philip 2003; Savage, Harrison and Falconer 2007; Paz 2010; Chesson 2015; Paz and Greenberg 2016.
- 66 Cf. Price and Feinman 2010; Wengrow 2015; Wengrow and Graeber 2015.
- 67 Greenberg et al. 2006.
- 68 Finkelstein 2013; however, see Ussishkin 2015 for a diverging view.
- 69 Höflmayer 2017b.
- 70 De Miroschedji 2013; fig. 12.
- 71 E.g., Areas UN, MS and SA in Greenberg et al. 2006.
- 72 Greenberg and Paz 2014.
- 73 Chesson 1998; Covello-Paran 2003; Chesson and Goodale 2014; Shai et al. 2014.
- 74 Berger 2013; 2018; Chesson and Goodale 2014; Paz, Mizrahi and Grossman 2015.
- 75 Greenberg 2002: 30–35.
- 76 Y. Paz 2011; 2018.
- 77 Douglas 2007; 2011.
- 78 Greenberg and Paz 2005.
- 79 Nigro 2010.
- 80 Eisenberg 2011.
- 81 Genz 2010b.
- 82 De Miroschedji 1990; 2013.
- 83 Seger 1989; 1993; Fargo 1993; Miroschedji and Sadeq 2000.
- 84 Genz 2002; Riehl 2004.
- 85 Nigro 2010; 2013.
- 86 De Miroschedji 2001; 2003.
- 87 Loud 1948.
- 88 Sala 2008.
- 89 Genz 2002; Sala 2008.
- 90 The suite of temples was first published by Loud (1948) and has been discussed repeatedly since that time, with numerous contradictory suggestions offered for its stratigraphy and dating. The latest treatments include those of Finkelstein (2013), Ussishkin (2015) and Adams (2017), with the last two suggesting an Intermediate Bronze Age date for the temples. The traditional EB III dating has been adhered to here.
- 91 Rast and Schaub 2003; Nigro 2013.
- 92 Marquet-Krause 1949; Callaway 1965; Ben-Tor and Netzer 1973.
- 93 Callaway 1972.
- 94 Maisler, Stekelis and Avi-Yonah 1952; Greenberg et al. 2017.
- 95 Herzog 1997; De Miroschedji 2001; 2003.
- 96 After de Certeau 1984.
- 97 Garstang 1932; 1935; Kenyon 1960.

- 98 Chesson 1999; 2003.
- 99 Greenberg 1992; 2002; and cf. the large Upper Galilee tumulus reported by Wachtel (2014).
- 100 Matthiae 1997; McClellan and Porter 1999; Schwartz 2008.
- 101 Iserlis, Greenberg and Goren 2012; Greenberg and Iserlis 2014; Iserlis 2015.
- 102 Beck 2002a: fig. 15.
- 103 Horwitz, personal communication.
- 104 Beck 2002a: 37–43.
- 105 Zarzecki-Peleg 1993.
- 106 Sowada 2000; 2009: 117; Paz 2014: 273–274.
- 107 Sass and Sebbane 2006.
- 108 Sebbane 2009: 170–171.
- 109 Braemer, Echallier and Taraqji 2004.
- 110 E.g., at Yarmuth, de Miroschedji 1988: pl. 46, and Bet Yerah, S. Paz 2014.
- 111 Al-Ajlouny et al. 2012.
- 112 Beck 2002b; al-Ajlouny, Douglas and Khrisat 2011; de Miroschedji 2011.
- 113 E.g., from Numayra and Bab edh-Dhra', Lapp 1989; 2003.
- 114 Sidon, Byblos, Fadous: Doumet-Serhal 2006; Daniel 2010; Giza: Reisner and Smith 1955: fig. 98.
- 115 Doumet-Serhal 2009; Genz et al. 2011; Maeir, Shai and Horwitz 2011.
- 116 Albright 1925; 1926; KKW has received several detailed treatments, whether typological, technological or comparative. The most recent collation of studies, with numerous references, is Greenberg and Goren 2009. Principal treatments are Amiran 1969, Esse 1991 and de Miroschedji 2000 for typology; Esse and Hopke 1986; Greenberg and Goren 2009 and Greenberg and Iserlis 2014 for technology; Hennessy 1967; Philip 1999 and Greenberg and Palumbi 2014 for comparative study.
- 117 Greenberg 2007; Paz 2009.
- 118 Greenberg et al. 2017.
- 119 Novacek 2007; Iserlis, Greenberg and Goren 2012.
- 120 Gosselain 1998.
- 121 Berger 2013; Maurer 2017.
- 122 Zuckerman Ziv-Esudri and Cohen-Weinberger 2009.
- 123 Greenberg 2014.
- 124 Greenberg, Shimelmitz and Iserlis 2014.
- 125 Kohl 2009.
- 126 E.g., Philip 1999; Greenberg and Palumbi 2014.
- 127 Iserlis 2009; 2015; Iserlis et al. 2010.
- 128 Greenberg 2007; Paz 2009.
- 129 Wilkinson 2014.
- 130 Wilkinson 2009; Batiuk 2013.

- 131 Maurer 2017 found skeletal pathologies consistent with yoking in cattle consumed by KKW-users at Tel Bet Yerah.
- 132 Greenberg 1992.
- 133 Porter 2002.
- 134 Levy et al. 2002.
- 135 Hauptmann et al. 2015.
- 136 Wachsmann 1998; Espinel 2002; Bevan 2014; Thalmann and Sowada 2014.
- 137 Saghie 1983.
- 138 Genz 2010b; Genz et al. 2016.
- 139 Thalmann 2010; 2016.
- 140 Koehler and Ownby 2012.
- 141 Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 233–287; Cooper 2006.
- 142 Wilkinson et al. 2014: 92.
- 143 Tufnell 1958: 31; Kenyon 1971; Bunimovitz and Greenberg 2004; 2006.
- 144 E.g., Kempinski 1978.
- 145 Philip 2001; Chesson and Philip 2003; Savage, Falconer and Harrison 2007; Chesson 2015.
- 146 Granovetter 1973.

CHAPTER 4

THE INTERMEDIATE BRONZE AGE: ENTERING THE ORBIT OF SYRIA

INTRODUCTION: WHAT HAPPENED AT THE END OF THE EARLY BRONZE AGE?

The fundamental instability of urban or urbanizing forms of settlement in the first half of the third millennium BCE, described in Chapter 3, set the stage for an extended period of regional, non-urban settlement trajectories that covers the entire second half of the third millennium BCE. This long process of urban retreat, which began as early as the first quarter of the third millennium in some regions, may no longer qualify for the sobriquet of collapse, but is nonetheless *post-urban*. That is, rather than representing a survival of a resilient, primeval village substratum to which urban society reverts at the end of EB III (as proposed by some of those who refuse urban status to any Levantine sites), it should be viewed as a response to the stresses and excesses of the urbanizing trends that had affected large parts of the Levant, and as a risk-minimizing strategy that expanded the resource base for a more dispersed population. A measure of the degree to which IBA settlement recognized previous centers is the peculiar choreography of settlement and burial near and within previously urban sites that will be detailed below. These testify to a persistence of memory and to the existence of a carefully constructed genealogy that underlies territorial claims and affinities of the inhabitants of the non-urban settlements. Similarly, persistent elements of material culture and technological style point to strong links between the urban and post-urban populations in most parts of the Levant.

The prolonged urban exodus of EB III should therefore be understood as a redeployment that opened new avenues of opportunity while breaking down the cultural barriers that characterized the ossified landscape of fortified towns. As will be seen, these new opportunities did not lead to the reemergence of centralized polities or to aggregations of wealth. Rather, for the next four centuries, the southern Levant appears to have settled into a “comfort zone,” from which it would be jolted only at the start of the second millennium BCE – a small-scale, politically segmented, territorially flexible village society.

Not to be overlooked is a sea-change in the direction and intensity of Levantine interaction with the broader region. The EB III southern Levant had grown increasingly insular, with only sporadic contacts with regions to its north and south. Egyptian connections had largely been severed, as Egypt cultivated the sea routes to Byblos and the north Levantine coast, while contact with Syria was limited to some down-the-line exchange of knick-knacks such as ornamental cosmetic containers, detached from any assemblage that might be associated with them. This all changed in the IBA, when the Levant was drawn into the orbit of the “second urban revolution” in Syria. While this reorientation affected the entire ambit of Levantine culture, it is clearly graded: areas nearer to urbanized western Syria show the greatest impact, while areas to the south reflect the attrition of distance and the effects of transmission, reinterpretation, and reintegration of Syrian concepts into south Levantine practice.

The mid-third-millennium transformation of northern Syria, from the coast to the Jezireh, has been characterized as “the full-fledged adoption of urban life and its associated institutions,”¹ comprising multitiered settlement hierarchies, monumental architecture, lavish funerary displays of elite status and the emergence bureaucratic state apparatuses. Western Syria, as far as the Euphrates Valley and even beyond it, was dominated by the Kingdom of Ebla in the Early Bronze IVA (c. 2500–2300 BCE). In the EB IVB (c. 2300–2100), after the Akkadian intervention and the destruction of Palace G at Ebla, the resurgent city at Ebla was one of several western Syrian urban centers that expanded their reach, founding settlements – or integrating pastoral groups who then founded new settlements – in the environmentally marginal areas along the edge of the steppes.² One of the pillars of the western Syrian urban-pastoral economy was the production of and trade in textiles. The Fragile Crescent Project conducted in Syria describes, in detail, the ramifications of the spread of an intensive wool economy in the Levant in the second half of the third millennium: the replacement of linen by wool freed considerable tracts of arable land for staple agriculture, whereas the production of fibers moved to the marginal zones, better suited for sheep husbandry.³ As we shall see, the transformation of the Syrian economy in the mid-third millennium impacted the southern Levant in multiple ways, some more subtle than others.

Notes on Terminology and Chronology

As the original black sheep of tell-based narratives of cultural evolution, the IBA and the terms used to describe it have always served as a sensitive gauge of interpretive trends in Levantine archaeology.⁴ When Nelson Glueck’s surveys in Transjordan and the Negev began to call attention to the numerous desert sites of the “Middle Bronze I” that had so long eluded stratified excavations, W.F. Albright, in an article titled “Abram the Hebrew,” which was still

required reading when I began my studies in the late 1970s, argued passionately for the attribution of those sites to donkey caravaneers of the early second millennium who would have plied the international routes between Middle Kingdom Egypt and Ur III and Old Assyrian Mesopotamia, and who were the prototype for the biblical patriarchs.⁵ Material-culture historians such as G.E. Wright, K. Kenyon, R. Amiran and M. Kochavi, struck by ceramic changes effected at the end of the EB III and visualizing them as the product of migration and invasion, sought out terms that would express the transitional nature of the ensuing period: “EB IV–MB I,” “Intermediate EB–MB,” and “Intermediate Bronze Age.” Olga Tufnell, who also favored invasion as the prime mover in cultural change, linked the “Intermediate EB–MB” to the European “Beaker Folk” and to Egypt’s First Intermediate Period, while coining the term “Caliciform Culture” for the period in question.⁶ The processual reaction to cultural–historical archaeology, embraced by local and anglophone researchers of the 1970s and 1980s in the Levant, included a healthy measure of indigenism; insisting that change was internally or systematically motivated unless proven otherwise, many archaeologists adopted the term “EB IV.”⁷ This term, while stressing continuity with the preceding period, has the added advantage of matching the terminology used in Syrian and Lebanese archaeology. Most recently, in an effort to create positivistic “neutral” definitions of the chronological divisions throughout Near East, the ARCANÉ project put forward the term Early South Levantine (ESL) 6, to cover the time period in question.⁸

The term “Intermediate Bronze Age,” as used here, subsumes earlier terminologies, which all refer to the same set of archaeological phenomena. It seems to be justified by the sheer length of the period – 400–600 years, depending on the subregion – and by the absence – for the most part – of the urbanizing elements that characterize the preceding Early Bronze Age and succeeding Middle Bronze Age. Where the term “EB IV” has become embedded in publications, for example, along the Lebanese coast and in Jordan, the excavators’ terminology will be used or noted.

In terms of absolute chronology, the transitions at either end of the period and between its internal stages are ill-defined. This is due to the absence of modeled radiocarbon sequences running from EB III to the IB, on the one hand, and from the IB to the MB I, on the other. The absence of such sequences is a product of the shifts in settlement patterns that characterize the beginning and end of the period, as well as the tendency of IBA settlements to relocate every few decades, which results in a wealth of sites and cemeteries spread across the landscape rather than superimposed on one another. A single modeled radiocarbon sequence from Tell Abu an-Niaj in the Jordan Valley – a region in which stratified IBA sites are most common – reportedly spans the entire second half of the third millennium.⁹ Combined radiocarbon and optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) measurements in the Negev

Highlands suggest an occupation in the earlier part of the IBA.¹⁰ These results are consistent with a less clearly resolved sequence for the stratified site of Tell Arqa in Lebanon, one of the few Levantine sites with an EB–IB–MB sequence that shows only brief gaps, and with the new radiocarbon schemes for the third and second millennium Levant.¹¹

Comparative ceramic studies have recently suggested a correlation between well-defined Levantine industries, such as the black wheelmade ware of the northern Jordan Valley and Bīqā‘, and Syrian EB IVB, which might be limited to the period between 2300 and 2100 BCE.¹² Jordan Valley IBA assemblages with strong EBA affinities, such as Bet Yerah Period E and Sha‘ar Hagolan, lack black wheelmade ware, and might represent an earlier ceramic phase, between 2500 and 2300.¹³ A similarly early date has been suggested for red-slipped ceramics of Transjordan and the Negev Highlands, and might receive support from twenty-sixth-century radiocarbon dates from the latter region.¹⁴ These will be discussed further below. Marta D’Andrea has collated a very broad selection of ceramics from the few stratified and radiocarbon-dated sites as well as from many single-occupation sites in an attempt to portray “early EB IV” versus “late EB IV” assemblages. The “early” phase is characterized by a technological regression in relation to the EB III, while the “late” phase provides more substantial regional industries that regain the use of slow-wheel coiling and adopt forms from the Syrian EB IVB sphere. As can be appreciated from her own use of scare quotes in these designations, the absolute chronological correlates of these technological observations are still uncertain.

The extension of the IBA over the entire second half of the third millennium might prompt the response that settlement and material culture assemblages are too thin on the ground to account for so long a period of time. In view of the downgrading of the intensity of urban EB proposed in Chapter 3 (and repeated in Chapter 5, for the MBA), a sparse population should be considered the norm over most of the Bronze Age Levant, the IBA being no exception. That said, discoveries of IBA village sites over recent decades, noted below, are gradually populating areas long thought to have been devoid of permanent settlement.

Climate

Of all the periods covered in this volume, there appears to be the greatest degree of agreement over the occurrence of significant climate events in the period between, roughly, 2200 and 1900 BCE, that is, in the second half of the IBA. Multiple lines of proxy evidence (extracted from ice cores, lake bottoms, and cave speleothems across the northern hemisphere) converge in indicating a significant and prolonged drought, caused by anomalies in the North Atlantic Oscillation, which is responsible for the Mediterranean westerlies that deliver precipitation in areas directly relevant to the Levant.¹⁵ But that is where

agreement ends, since there has emerged a considerable body of debate over the impact of this event on microregions within the Levant, and over the nature of human response to it. The IBA is a case in point: clearly, the initial impetus toward the abandonment of towns, in the first half of the third millennium, can hardly be related to droughts at the end of the millennium. Moreover, the IBA preference for marginal-zone settlement is maintained from start to end of the period (though it is perhaps more pronounced in the earlier centuries) and would appear to be counterintuitive for a dry period, as would the retreat from these zones in the presumably somewhat improved second millennium climate. Nonetheless, there is a significance to the relative degradation of the agricultural potential of the Levant as a whole in the last quarter of the third millennium and perhaps a century beyond. This is the background against which the decisions taken by communities and individuals should be judged.¹⁶

Regions of Settlement

By c. 2400 BCE, all sites in the Levant that had shown an EB III presence were abandoned, some indefinitely, others only briefly. The fact that even sites with an ideal location and a long settlement history before and after the IBA experienced at least a temporary abandonment in the EBA–IBA transition suggests that it was marked by a significant conceptual rift, which required a fundamental restructuring of society, settlement and production. In Chapter 3 it was suggested that this restructuring was not a dramatic collapse, but a drawn-out transformation. Archaeologically, it is expressed in a series of global changes:

- Settlement gaps at mounds, which were abandoned either for a brief spell at the start of the IBA, for the entire duration of the IBA or permanently (or at least for many centuries, until their previous nature had been long forgotten)
- Resettlement of sparsely settled zones at the margins of EB III settlement, such as the coastal strip and the semi-arid margins in the Negev, eastern Samaria and the Transjordanian plateau
- Village settlement on slopes adjacent to wadi beds and alluvial valleys. Especially in the Jordan Valley, such village sites could be long-lived, creating minor tell sites of their own.
- A resurgent mortuary landscape, characterized by extensive shaft-tomb cemeteries, sometimes unassociated with comparable settlement remains. Interments are often individual and exhibit expressions of status, reflecting a break with the previous collective ethos.
- Regional ceramic styles associated with village workshops, new ceramic repertoires and the much-increased circulation of metals and metal artifacts;

these signify new relations of production and new modes of social interaction.

The fissioning of large settlements at the EBA–IBA transition and the establishment or enlargement of nearby cemeteries is representative of the larger settlement picture. The IBA is characterized by an abundance of sites and of cemeteries (both below and above ground). Few settlement sites are stratified, so that their abundance can generally be taken to represent the pattern created by semi- or partially sedentary groups, moving through the landscape over the five centuries of the IBA (Figure 4.1).

Lebanon, Galilee and Hauran. Genz distinguishes between south Lebanon and the Bīqāʿ, where IBA remains are known primarily from tombs, and the north Lebanese coast, where urban settlement continued at some sites (principally Byblos and Arqa).¹⁷ Settlement remains were recorded at Tyre on the coast and at Baalbek in the valley, while Marfoe notes IBA pottery collected at sixteen sites in the Bīqāʿ, all of them previously occupied mounds, and a chamber tomb at Rafid in the southeastern Bīqāʿ.¹⁸ In highland Galilee, five sites – most of them previously occupied – show some evidence of occupation, alongside nine tombs, most of them not clearly related to settlements.¹⁹ In the Hauran, settlement declined (e.g., at Labwe) with some pastoral continuity at edges of previous towns and a marked pastoralist presence at Kh. Umbashi.²⁰

Upper and Central Jordan Valley. In a pattern that appears typical of valley settlement, the seven identified settlement sites in the Hula Valley were all established on mounds or previously settled sites. Apart from Tel Hazor and Tel Dan, where ephemeral IBA settlement succeeded urban EB III occupation, the other sites had all been abandoned since the late EB I or EB II. A shaft-tomb cemetery adjacent to Hazor and dolmen fields ringing the valley have been attributed to the IBA as well. Bechar has suggested that the IBA settlement represented in the Hula Valley sites should be dated to the second half of the period.²¹

Surveys conducted in the Jezreel and Bet Shean Valleys all note a sharp increase in the number of sites from EB III – counting as many as one hundred find-spots, including upward of twenty cemeteries.²² It is clear that a good number of these occurrences – many of them on mounded, multiperiod sites – mark ephemeral settlement, but there is ample evidence for sustained village settlement as well, particularly in previously unoccupied or long-abandoned sites, such as ʿEin el-Hilu, Nahal Rimmonim and Murhan. Tell sites, including Megiddo and Bet Shean, show ephemeral occupation on the mounds, off-mound settlement and large cemeteries. On the eastern side of the valley, settlement is clustered in the central sector, north of Wadi Zerqa, with a large and long-lived village site at Tell Um Hammad and smaller, stratified sites excavated at Tell Abu an-Niaj and Tell el-Hayyat. Large, partly excavated cemeteries are reported at Wadi al-Hammah and Tiwal ash-Sharqi.²³

Highlands and Coastal Plain. In the central hills, 285 find-spots of the IBA are recorded in the West Bank archaeological database;²⁴ of these, about a third are cemetery and cave sites, and many more are ephemeral or uncertain identifications. Finkelstein noted forty-nine settlement sites, to which more recent surveys may have added a few.²⁵ He noted a pattern that still appears to hold true, of a greater proportion of settlements in the northern part of the hill country, and of cemeteries in the southern part. The proliferation of small sites and cemeteries in the south might be causally related to the earlier, late EB III, growth of settlement in the adjacent plains. Similarly, Palumbo notes more than 250 find-spots east of the Jordan, of which 29 are cemeteries and only 20 are positively identified as settlements, largely conforming to EB III regional patterns.²⁶ A more detailed review of settlement on the Kerak plateau seems to confirm the EB III–IBA continuity and the likelihood of a considerable number of settled sites, while highlighting the considerable confusion caused by imprecise survey period attributions.²⁷ Sixteen sites and seventeen cemeteries have been counted along the coastal plain, many of them in littoral areas that had not been settled in the EB II or III, with several more sites and tombs surfacing due to salvage work along the eastern fringes of the coastal plain in recent years.²⁸

Negev and Sinai. Upward of 300 IBA sites and tumulus fields have been surveyed and excavated in the Negev Highlands, and a total of perhaps 500 in the Negev and the Arabah Valley. A similar number of sites is recorded in the northern and central Sinai.²⁹ Here too, most sites, by far, are tiny and short-lived, and only a handful are characterized as “permanent.” There is disagreement whether some of the sites attributed to the IBA might have been settled earlier, in EB III, but there is no question that the IBA represents the high-water mark of Bronze Age arid zone settlement.

The prodigious number of IBA “sites” cited in the preceding paragraphs – approaching a total of 2,000 in all parts of the Levant and Sinai – requires explanation and qualification. One aspect to be considered is the visibility of IBA ceramics, which results in their easy identification even as individual occurrences. While in previous and some subsequent periods ceramic production and consumption was concentrated in urban workshops and domestic quarters, the democratic character of IBA ceramic production meant that everyone had access to the typical workshop products. Thus, in a period like EB III, where diagnostics are closely linked to particular workshops – whether the giant platters and pithoi of urban centers or the specialized Khirbet Kerak ware that was largely limited to a small number of communities – non-urban pottery production, if it existed, has never been described and remains buried in the “non-diagnostic” fraction of survey collections. In the IBA, typical techniques, decorations and clays are spread across the entire Levantine



Figure 4.1 Map of sites mentioned in this chapter.

landscape. Another aspect to be considered is the sheer length of the period and the transitory character of many settlements, which creates an abundance of sites. That is, single communities may be responsible for several sites over time, including both year-round and seasonal occupations. Because of the sedentary, tell-oriented bias of Bronze Age archaeology in the Levant, the dynamics of IBA settlement remain largely in the realm of surmise, founded on survey and salvage work and chance finds, rather than a focused research strategy. This has only lately begun to change, and preliminary results of new studies will be incorporated below, in the detailed description of the period.

Settlement Dynamics: The Abandonment of (Most) Tells

As we saw in Chapter 3, each of the fortified towns of the EB III took its own path to abandonment: some were abandoned early, and others late; some appear to have devoted enormous energies to augmenting their fortifications, right to the bitter end, while others dispensed with fortifications and seem to have established themselves as centralized manorial estates. Thus, though all these towns or strongholds were deserted by 2400 BCE, several typical trajectories to the creation of the post-urban landscape can be described.

At Tel Bet Yerah, in the Jordan Valley, Greenberg and Eisenberg describe a “terminal” EBA settlement that appears to catch the process of collapse in flagrante: the floors of a warren of multiroom, late EBA houses, built in proximity to the latest fortifications there, yielded pottery of crude local manufacture that clearly postdated the classic EB III industries, yet lacked the characteristics of standard IBA pottery, known from many nearby sites.³⁰ Soon afterward, two slab-lined tombs were built just south of the mound, in Kibbutz Deganya A;³¹ they contain ceramics and metal finds that must slightly postdate the “terminal EBA” settlement on the mound, illustrating a common IBA theme of using the abandoned mound as a mortuary marker and perhaps staking a territorial claim for the lands of the former urban settlement. Only a few kilometers south of Bet Yerah, at the far end of the same Kinrot valley that sustained the former town, the large IBA village of Sha‘ar Hagolan was established, virtually reproducing the layout of the “terminal EBA” quarter at Bet Yerah and exhibiting a rich assemblage of well-made IBA ceramics (see Figure 4.8).³² Tel Bet Yerah itself was never resettled in the IBA proper, and only sporadically in later periods.

A slightly different path was taken at Tel Lachish, which had a robust, though largely unexcavated, EB III settlement: here, the site was completely abandoned, with IBA occupation reemerging on a hill just northwest of the mound, within view of it.³³ A shaft-tomb cemetery was established on the slope beneath the site. Similarly, the town of Tel Yarmuth was abandoned for the duration of the IBA (and beyond), with small IBA settlements and cemeteries established just out of sight of the mound, 1–2 kilometers to the northeast.³⁴ This pattern appears to have been repeated at several other sites in the southern plains (e.g., Tell es-Sakan and the nearby IBA cemetery at Tell el-‘Ajjul).

At the great fortified center of 'Ai, no IBA settlements were identified on the mound or in its vicinity, but the extensive cemeteries of 'Ain Samiya/Dhahr Mirzbaneh, and the associated tumulus and platform that appear to have been mortuary cult installations, were established within 10–12 kilometers of it.³⁵ This pattern is repeated in other hill sites, where IBA hamlets, tombs and cult sites offer a nuanced picture of hill-country settlement, suggesting an integration of agricultural and pastoral pursuits within the former urban territories.³⁶

At Bab edh-Dhra', Jericho, Tel Bet Shean and Megiddo, there is evidence – usually ephemeral – of IBA reoccupation after a period of abandonment. At Bab edh-Dhra' and Jericho, a few houses were built on the perimeter or just outside the erstwhile town,³⁷ while at Megiddo and Bet Shean there is some activity on the mound proper; at Bab edh-Dhra' and Megiddo there is evidence for small-scale cultic activity as well. Each of these sites has a substantial cemetery that must have served more than just the temporary occupants of the mound. Tel Hazor and Tel Dan also show limited reoccupation, although the cemeteries associated with these sites are either not identified (Dan) or not excavated (Hazor).³⁸

In all the cases described above, the former occupants of the EBA towns were dispersed, creating a new, site-abundant settlement pattern that carefully avoided the reinstatement of the fortified place as a dominant presence (Figure 4.2). Yet, in each case, the erstwhile towns were not forgotten and often continued to serve as a commemorative or territorial resource: small settlements were established within a 2-kilometer radius of the mound and earlier cemeteries were reused, or, as was often the case, new cemeteries were established within view, where there had been no EBA cemeteries before. At Bab edh-Dhra' and Megiddo, cultic structures were maintained at the edge of the mound or in the previous cultic area. In those cases where settlement was renewed, it either took the form of a squat within the old EBA buildings (e.g., at Dan and Hazor) or carefully skirted earlier ruins (as at Jericho). A. Mazar sees this as intentional avoidance of places associated with recent disasters. S. Paz expands on the theme, suggesting that the tells were part of a redrawing of the IBA cognitive landscape, specifically intended to marginalize the former fortified centers and reject the values embodied by them.³⁹ The almost universal presence of shaft-tomb cemeteries adjacent to these sites, however, does point to a still-viable territorial claim. Whether as direct, biological descendants of the previous inhabitants, as non-urban kinsfolk, or as new arrivals inventing a historically sanctioned connection to the land, IBA people were not oblivious to the ruins of earlier towns but incorporated them in their landscape.

If tell-avoidance was a common and significant trope in the cognitive landscape of the IBA, it was not universal. A few tell sites, in different parts of the countryside, were substantially resettled in the IBA. These fall into two groups: north Lebanese coastal sites like Tell Arqa and Byblos, where the

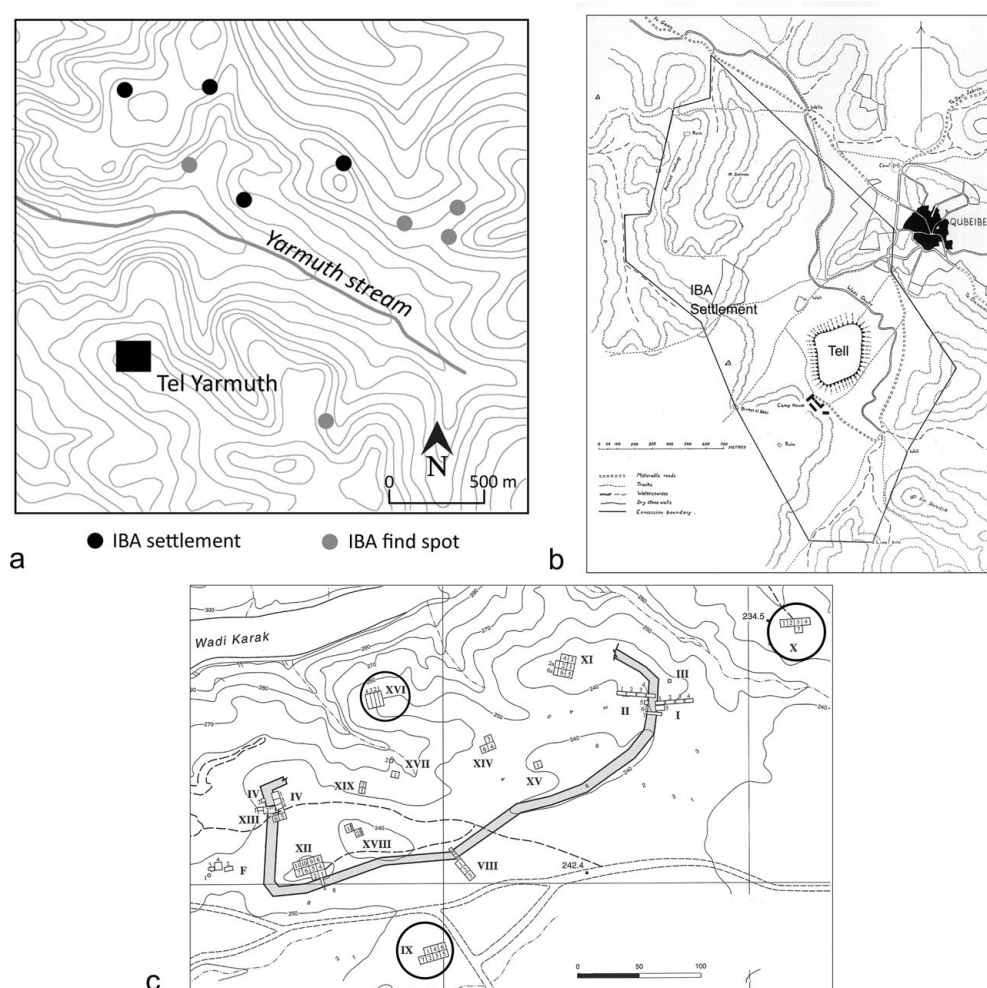


Figure 4.2 Tell-avoidance in the IBA: (a) the location of settlements in relation to Tel Yarmuth (courtesy of S. Paz), (b) Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish and (c) the walled precinct of EBA Bab edh-Dhra', with IBA find-spots circled. Redrawn after Tufnell 1958: pl. 89, and Rast and Schaub 2003: fig. 1.4.

settlement hiatus must have been very brief, and where IBA (or, more properly for this region, EB IV) settlement shows no decline with respect to the earlier period, and a few south Levantine sites that buck the typical IBA trend and fully reoccupy earlier mounds.

At Tell Arqa, part of a densely built residential quarter was excavated (Figure 4.3), spanning the entire second half of the third millennium BCE (Strata 16–15, Period P).⁴⁰ Houses, built along a peripheral street, were two stories high, with the lower floor given over – by the end of Stratum 16 – entirely to storage of great quantities of grain in a series of narrow cells and the upper floors used as living quarters. A great conflagration at about 2200 BCE



Figure 4.3 EB IV houses at Tell Arqa. Courtesy of J.-P. Thalmann.

allowed the preservation of the charred grain and massive quantities of carbonized timber used in the construction of the house interiors. The site was not fortified, but protected by the continuous exterior wall of a row of rooms built around the perimeter of the site. The pottery is described as very much a local repertoire, different from that of the preceding phase, characterized by “a coherent set of liquid-related or drinking vessels, including a variety of jugs and large numbers of conical beakers and one-handled cups.”⁴¹ The flint and metal finds, however, evince a strong connection to inland Syria.

Byblos underwent a significant destruction in the latter part of the third millennium, bringing to an end the urban EB III settlement there (Stratum K IV, according to Saghie’s scheme). It was immediately rebuilt, preserving its cultic core while apparently losing some of its urban density.⁴² Whether this transition is coeval with the EBA–IBA transition in the southern Levant is uncertain, although the presence of Fifth Dynasty objects in K IV might indicate a late twenty-fourth-century date for the end of the EB III at Byblos. Genz notes the presence of inscribed Sixth Dynasty objects, perhaps in the earlier IBA (EB IV) stratum at the site, as well as evidence for mutual contact with the Mesopotamian Ur III dynasty, at the very end of the millennium.⁴³ Like Arqa, Byblos appears to have developed its own ceramic tradition in the late third millennium, showing some generic similarities to neighboring regions but evincing little interaction with the village industries of the inland and southern Levant.

In the southern Levant, Tel Na‘ama in the Hula Valley had been abandoned since the end of the EB II when it was resettled in the IBA.⁴⁴ Some 2 meters of accumulation suggest a substantial and long-lived settlement on the 4-hectare mound. Tell Um Hammad, a large EB I site in the southern Jordan Valley that was reduced to a modest village in EB II, was resettled extensively in the IBA, moving (expanding?) from the eastern to the western hill.⁴⁵ The resettlement

was accompanied by the establishment of several cemeteries. Kh. Iskandar, on the Wadi Wala in southern Jordan, was a fortified EB III town. Uniquely among sites of this type, it was extensively reoccupied in the IBA after what appears to be a brief hiatus and its fortifications may have remained in use.⁴⁶ All these southern Levant settlements, however, can be accommodated within the pattern of IBA village settlement, which will be our next concern.

THE IBA VILLAGE AND ITS MATERIAL CULTURE

Intermediate Bronze Age villages are typically composed of sprawling house agglomerations, not unlike those found in EBA towns and barrios. These agglomerations may be composed of as few as one and as many as five individual family units, separated from other units by courtyards, open space, or alleyways. The egalitarian nature of the village house units, their ability to expand and merge according to need, and the presence of communal space, where collective activities such as grain-processing or animal-corralling could be pursued, all point to a corporate form of village organization and collective ownership of land. We might also expect to see some overlap between the distribution of clustered villages and that of collective burials in tombs (see below), but it is difficult, at present, to show a systematic connection between known villages and excavated IBA cemeteries. A review of several representative excavated sites follows.

Sha'ar Hagolan was one of several large settlements in the Jordan Valley.⁴⁷ Parts of several house clusters have been excavated, apparently near the center of the village, but evidence for occupation extends over 20 hectares, and the excavator assumes that it was composed of several distinct clusters similar to the ones excavated. The central cluster, Area 100, included about twenty-five rooms and spaces that the excavator assigned to six separate houses of irregular plan (Figure 4.4). Most houses could be assigned a central broad room and auxiliary spaces. Area 200, nearer the edge of the settlement, included three main units with associated courtyards and open space between them. Based on the ceramic, ground stone and chipped stone finds, food processing, preparation, storage and consumption were carried out in each household unit. Canaanian sickle blades attest to the perseverance of this local industry in the IBA, but the apparent absence of tabular scrapers, which was a regular ingredient of earlier third-millennium assemblages, might indicate a breakdown of one of the small-scale interregional EBA networks of production and trade.⁴⁸ The rich pottery assemblage, composed primarily of storage jars, cooking pots and open bowls reminiscent of the late EBA (see below, Figure 4.7), but with an added ingredient of pouring and drinking vessels, all appears to be of local manufacture, with the possible exception of a bag-shaped jar with applied rope decoration, which seems to have been produced in the

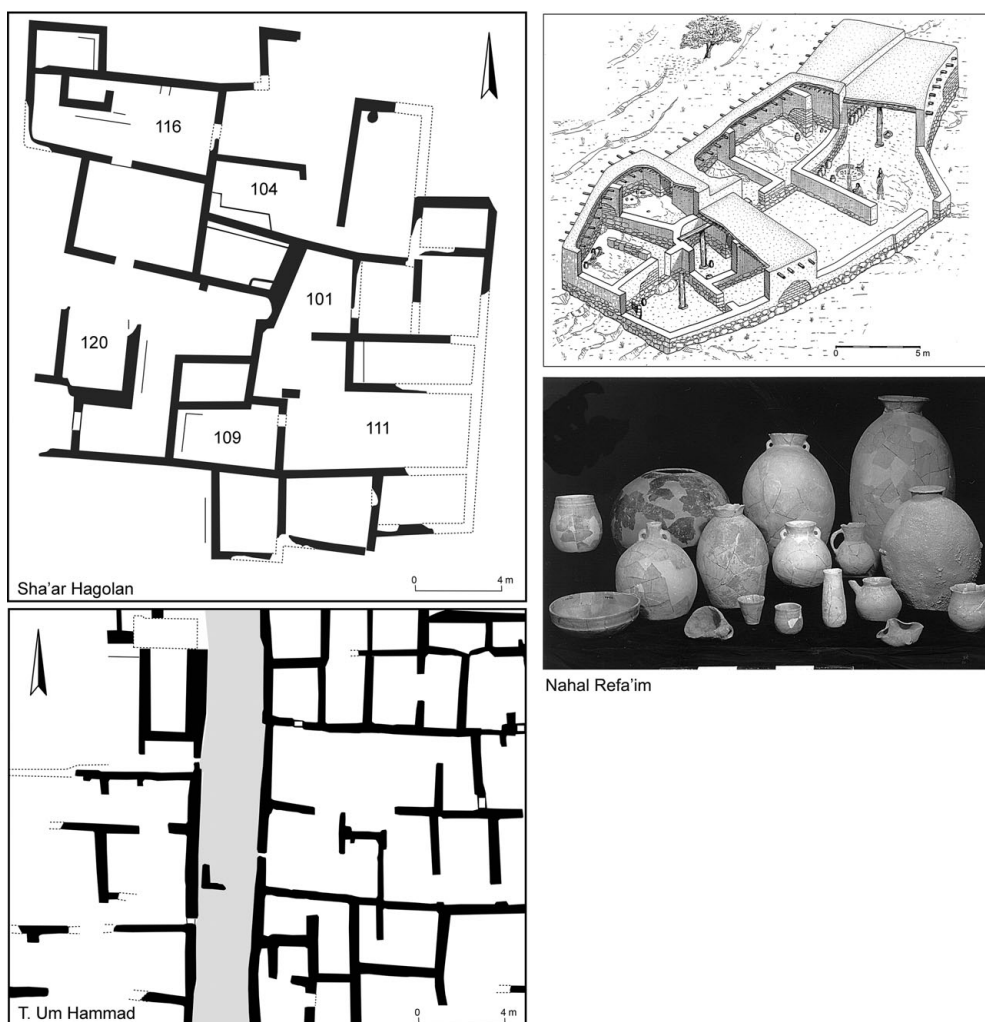


Figure 4.4 Block-plans of Shaar Hagolan and Tell Um Hammad in the IBA, and an independent, modular house unit, with its ceramic assemblage, in Nahal Refa'im.

Plans after Eisenberg 2012: Plan 2; Kennedy 2016: fig. 5; L. Ritmeyer reconstruction and C. Amit photo. Courtesy of E. Eisenberg.

Bet Shean region.⁴⁹ The relation between the local ceramic industries will be explored in greater detail below.

Sha'ar Hagolan can be compared with two extensively excavated sites in adjacent regions: the large settlement at Tell Um Hammad in the middle Jordan Valley and the diminutive hamlet of 'Ein el-Hilu in the northern foothills bordering the Jezreel Valley.

The eastern mound of Tell Um Hammad, on the alluvial fan of Wadi Zerqa, was occupied from Chalcolithic times until the early EB II, and then abandoned for most of the first half of the third millennium.⁵⁰ It was

reoccupied in EB IV, expanding or migrating from the eastern to the western mound – a distance of 600 meters – as the period wore on. The larger western mound, about 3 hectares in size, was the more densely settled of the two, with the latest construction phases characterized by a well-ordered layout of clustered rectangular compounds separated by paved alleyways (Figure 4.4). As in the case of other eastern Jordan Valley sites – Tell Abu an-Niaj, an agrarian village with a long sequence of occupation, and Tell Iktanu, a stratified site with rectangular house-clusters and potter's kilns⁵¹ – detailed descriptions of the excavated households have yet to be published.

Tell Um Hammad is linked to an enormous cemetery, Tiwal ash-Sharqi, that lies to the southwest of the site, composed primarily of shaft tombs with individual burials. Differences in tomb size and quantity of burial deposits (primarily pottery) indicate subtle status differences, which cannot be directly translated into simple categories of “wealth.” Like Sha‘ar Hagolan, the site and cemetery reveal a ceramic tradition that is in tune with the broader region but which has its own local idiosyncrasies that testify to village workshop production.⁵²

Excavations at ‘Ein el-Hilu, on the northwestern margins of the Jezreel Valley, have revealed the greater part of this small village site.⁵³ Parts of six house compounds were discovered with a large part of their inventory intact (the discovery of intact vessels at many IBA settlements seems to point to organized migration from these sites, since almost any other form of abandonment would have been accompanied by extensive scavenging). The houses have a sprawling modular layout resembling the houses of Sha‘ar Hagolan, but they are not tightly clustered. Spaces between the houses and at either end of the village were used for agricultural processing, most likely by several households together. In three houses, small cult corners were identified, marked by a standing stone or pillar. The ceramic inventory at ‘Ein el-Hilu greatly resembles that of Sha‘ar Hagolan and Um Hammad in functionality and in broad stylistic terms, but has the local variations that can be observed at virtually every IBA site. Significantly, there are clear ceramic imports, mainly from the north and central Jordan Valley, but also from the northern Levant. The chipped stone and ground-stone assemblage points to agricultural processing, while several clay spindle whorls suggest some textile manufacture. The mammal assemblage points to small-scale sheep/cattle husbandry focused on traction or secondary products (milk, wool), as well as limited pig-raising for meat. The presence of imported ceramics as well as Canaanean sickle blades points to the participation of this small hamlet in a greater regional exchange network. ‘Ein el-Hilu might, therefore, have been a seasonal offshoot of a larger central site, or its inhabitants might have participated in periodic regional gatherings that allowed them to maintain relations with their own clans or with others. A single tomb found about 300 meters south of the site has been associated with it, but there are large, possibly regional burial grounds within a radius of a few kilometers from the site, for example, at Maz‘arib or even Hazorea‘ and Megiddo.⁵⁴

Salvage excavations at other sites in the Jezreel Valley, for example, at 'Afula in the central valley and at Murhan in the east, uncovered parts of domestic house units closely resembling those of 'Ein el-Hilu.⁵⁵ Horbat Qishron, too, on the northeast margins of the valley, yielded an architectural and material-culture assemblage that is virtually interchangeable with the valley sites.⁵⁶

Intermediate Bronze Age village sites in the central hills have been excavated recently in the Bet Shemesh foothills, and on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem, but the most extensively excavated site, although not fully published, remains that of Nahal Refa'im, excavated by Emanuel Eisenberg in 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁷ Spread over an area of several hectares on several natural terraces overlooking a major seasonal stream (see Chapter 5, Figure 5.21), the Nahal Refa'im village seems to be composed of a central cluster of about thirty rooms belonging to three or four clustered houses and several additional houses at intervals of 15–30 meters. Like other settlements, the houses at Nahal Refa'im are modular; that is, they seem to have an original core of a square or rectangular hall and two or three rooms, to which additional rooms, storage spaces, courtyards and fences were added according to need (Figure 4.4). At least three instances of domestic cult installations are reported, consisting of single or grouped standing stones. As at all other IBA villages, the household ceramic, stone and flint inventories are fully compatible with a sedentary, mixed farming subsistence base, although there appear to be relatively fewer bowls, in comparison with the north, and more pouring and drinking vessels – a preference repeated at several other sites in the southern hills and the Negev. Botanic remains included cereals, legumes, grapes and olives. The mammal assemblage shows a broad spectrum of species, including sheep and goat (81 percent), pig (15 percent), cattle (3 percent) and two equids (0.7 percent).⁵⁸ The relative abundance of immature sheep/goat and the general properties of the site are more consistent with meat or milk exploitation than with wool production. Ceramic production was almost certainly local, since two mine shafts that followed a vein of dolomitic sand used in the local pottery were excavated just above the settlement. The shafts were dated by secondary IBA interments introduced into one of them after it went out of use. Additional caves within the site were used for individual burials, and a small shaft-tomb cemetery – also composed of individual burials – was excavated on a hilltop, a few hundred meters north of the site.

Kh. Iskandar, in the central Transjordanian plateau, on a strategic crossing point on the north bank of the Wadi Walla, is something of an outlier among the IBA settlements, as it represents a robust, stratified, town-like settlement sequence on the site of an earlier EBA fortified town. More than any other excavated IBA site, Kh. Iskandar offers a sense of continuity with EBA settlement characteristics, while sharing important commonalities with simpler IBA sites, such as a similar material culture assemblage and similar burial practices (both of which are markedly discontinuous with the EBA). Two



Figure 4.5 The “gateway” in Area C at Kh. Iskandar. Courtesy of S. Richard.

main areas of excavation have been described in some detail: Area C, where parts of two multiroomed rectilinear compounds flank what has been described as a stepped and paved “gateway” (Figure 4.5), perhaps delimiting the northern half of the previous fortified enceinte as the area of concentrated IBA settlement, about 1 hectare in size;⁵⁹ and Area B, where parts of a large, well-built domestic compound with pillared rooms overlies an earlier structure that contained a very large assemblage of complete ceramic vessels.⁶⁰ The wealth of finds in both phases in Area B testifies not only to sedentary agricultural pursuits but to the accumulation of surplus staple goods and of social capital by some of the residents. An additional marker of social status is the relatively large size and periodic reuse of several burial chambers in the adjacent cemetery. But beyond the robust construction, the accumulation of staples and the large tombs, there is no other evidence for outstanding wealth at the site. Moreover, the petrographic study of its ceramics points to a limited range of regional contacts, when compared with, for example, the Negev sites (below).⁶¹

Deep in the Negev Highlands, Har Yeroham is the southernmost site to present the typical IBA village structure (Figure 4.6).⁶² One large compound and two smaller ones, covering about 0.3 hectare in all, were excavated. The main compound, in the eastern part of the site, contained about twenty rectilinear rooms, many of them with stone bases for roof supports, which seem to belong to two or three domestic units. Two occupation phases were recorded in some of the structures. Finds appeared to be consistent with agricultural pursuits (at least, seasonal ones), since they included a handful of sickle blades and grinding stones, alongside the usual ceramic inventory and a large component of flint pounders, typical of the Negev IBA. Remarkably, a ceramic workshop, including a kiln, abutted the main compound, attesting to local production of pottery even at such a small, isolated site. The western compound contained fewer structures, an area with cupmarks that may have

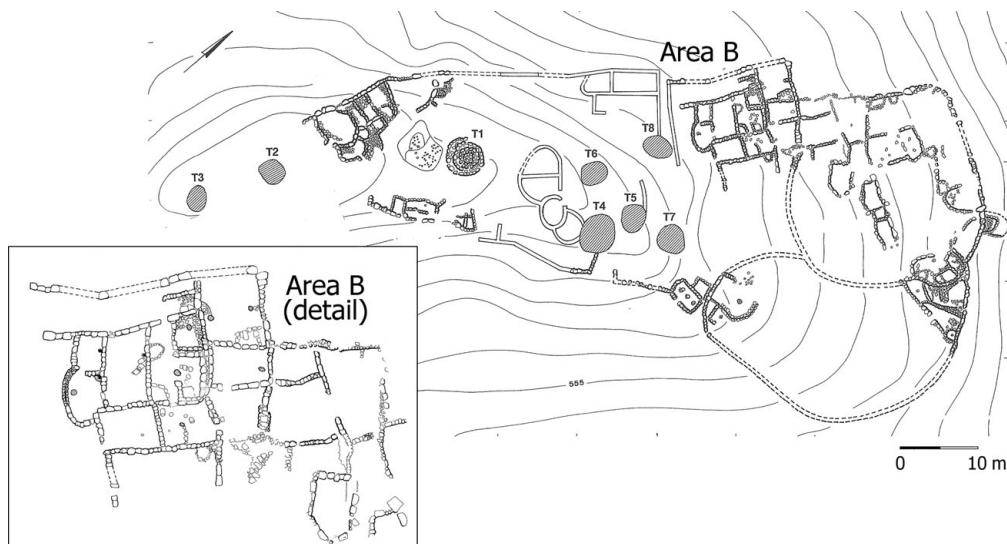


Figure 4.6 Plan of Har Yeroham. After Cohen 1999: fig. 67. Reproduced by permission of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

been used for communal processing activities, and several burial cairns, which were considered contemporary with the latest phase of IBA settlement. A cache of copper ingots discovered at Har Yeroham connects this site with others in the Negev Highlands that appear to have been part of a regional network of copper extraction and distribution (below). This site therefore combines (coevally? in sequence?) elements of village organization typical of the Mediterranean agricultural zone with elements that tie it to the IBA metalworking complex and to the long-standing local “Timnian” complex.

A complementary settlement type to the typical IBA village is the dwelling cave, several of which were excavated at Jebel Qa‘aqir, at the margins of a large shaft-tomb cemetery complex.⁶³ Dwelling caves were slightly modified natural caves, of a type that abounds in the chalk foothills of the central highlands, especially in the south. The caves at Jebel Qa‘aqir were up to three rooms deep; some appear to have been used as dwellings, others as refuse dumps. The rich material assemblage associated with the caves resembles that of the built villages, including a large component of storage jars, open bowls, cups and cooking vessels, as well as a few teapots, amphoriskoi and other types. Non-ceramic finds included Canaanite blades, grindstones, mortars, pounders, and a clay loom weight. A terracotta figurine of clear Syrian type is noteworthy. A kiln, found at an undisclosed distance from the caves and from some above-ground structural remains at the site, represents yet another case of on-site ceramic production, which must be considered a characteristic feature of IBA village settlement. W.G. Dever has long presented Jebel Qa‘aqir as a prototypical site of pastoral nomads who practiced north–south seasonal transhumance between winter pastures in the Negev Highlands and summer pastures in the southern Hebron

hills.⁶⁴ There is, however, no compelling reason to identify the Qa‘aqir cave-dwellers as nomadic. Rather, the caves should be understood as seasonal dwellings of villagers from the nearby region, some of whom may eventually have split off from the mother village to make a permanent home in the caves. This pattern of use is well known in the south Judean hills region in premodern times, and can be attested for several historical and archaeological periods.⁶⁵

The preceding survey of IBA villages, most of them excavated or published in recent decades, offers a new and remarkably uniform portrait of IBA village life that can be characterized almost as the polar opposite of the EBA town: where the town constrained housing to nuclear family units, the loose village structure allowed modular expansion for extended families; where town walls advertised boundaries, villages merged into the countryside; where urban power was expressed through collective labor and monumental construction, village houses reflected the labor power of the nuclear or extended family alone, and no public construction was attempted. To the extent that status was manifested, it was in the growth of families and of their productive capacity, as reflected in houses with a greater number of rooms or greater storage capacity. Ritual was confined to the domestic sphere, including – as I shall try to demonstrate below – mortuary ritual; this is in sharp contrast to the collective ethos of the EBA as expressed in its temple complexes as well as in its collective cave tombs and charnel houses. The segmented political structure of villages was conducive to fissioning, that is, the sloughing-off of small groups who founded new settlements at a distance from the parent settlement. This probably occurred when villages grew and created pressure on the lands in their immediate environs. But despite the absence of any visible political hierarchy, IBA villages, as a type, show greater stability than any previous social arrangement in the Levant since the Late Chalcolithic. Indeed, the largest villages are usually those that show the greatest longevity.

I have noted, in several separate instances, the existence of small cult corners or stelae in IBA domestic contexts. There is, in addition to these, only one shrine or cultic installation that can be associated with the IBA village population (leaving aside the possible shrines at reoccupied tell sites): Tel ‘Ashir, on a kurkar hill in the central coastal plain, overlooking the sea.⁶⁶ This isolated site consisted of a row of rounded drum-shaped stones, each paired with an upright slab – all of limestone – the whole surrounded by patches of ash, collapsed bricks, carbonized wood, ash and a few artifacts, including fragmentary ceramics, copper daggers and tools, and flint blades. It is not associated with any settlement remains.

Village Ceramic Production

Ceramic production was integral to village life in the IBA and was one of the modes of post-urban regeneration. In the EB III, ceramics had been purveyors of inequality: the great Houses of the EB III used massive pithoi to advertise their

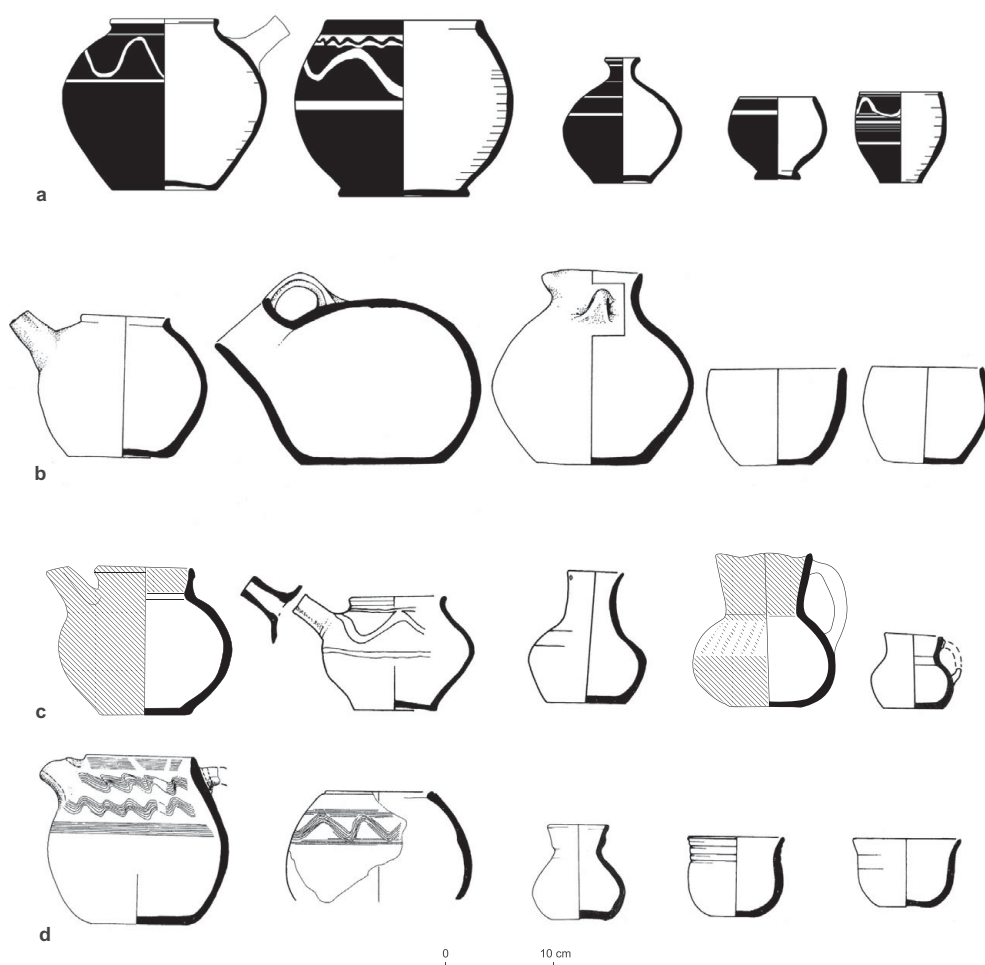


Figure 4.7 The IBA drinking repertoire in several workshop traditions: (a) black wheelmade ware (after Tadmor 1978: fig. 8), (b) northern Jordan Valley (after Eisenberg 1985: figs. 3, 4), (c) middle Jordan Valley (after Feig 1991: figs. 5, 6) and (d) Judean hills/Negev Highlands (after Cohen 1999: figs. 145–147). Redrawn by N. Earon.

accumulation of staple wealth, and the massive platters to engage in conspicuous hospitality, while putting those who were being fed in irremediable debt. With the demise of towns, the attached ceramic industries were all extinguished; ceramic know-how, however, was certainly preserved, since it quickly resurfaced in the dispersed village industries of the IBA. Those industries maintained the technology of EBA ceramic production, while improving its technical quality and changing its decorative and formal priorities. One of the striking changes in the ceramic inventory was the adoption of a new set of containers designed for the mixing, distribution and consumption of beverages (Figure 4.7).

These did not take the same form in every region – for example, distribution vessels could have a pinched rim (common in the northern Jordan Valley) or a separately formed spout (common in the south and coast), cups could be relatively deep or shallow – but the functions were nearly always reproduced. The shift from competitive feasting to convivial drinking implied by the change in the ceramic inventory has deep social implications that resonate with the other changes effected in the transition to IBA. But they also bear the imprint of cultural transmission, since a similar set was adopted broadly in western Syria in the mid-third millennium, and certain stylistic flourishes – as well as a complete repertoire of specialized vessels (the black wheelmade ware of the Biqua' and northern Jordan Valley) – can be shown to travel from north to south.⁶⁷

The rarity of stratified IBA sites and the long duration now accorded to the period seems to have induced a need among archaeologists to subdivide the period chronologically. Since radiocarbon dates are still thin on the ground, ceramic typology has been invoked to establish a bi- or tripartite division (e.g., EB IVA, B, C). But, as in the 400-year EB III, little consensus has been achieved. Putting aside chronology, for the moment, the rich ceramic record of the period does allow us to draw a map of interlocking regional ceramic traditions that represent a blend of pre-existing local styles, acquisitions from the Syrian ceramic tradition, and innovation.⁶⁸

A graphic illustration of the process of ceramic regeneration can be seen in the Kinrot Valley, south of Lake Kinneret, where a “terminal EB” post-urban ceramic horizon identified at Tel Bet Yerah gives way to a specialized village industry represented in the abandonment assemblage of the sprawling IBA site of Sha'ar Hagolan (Figure 4.8).⁶⁹ The Period E assemblage at Bet Yerah was

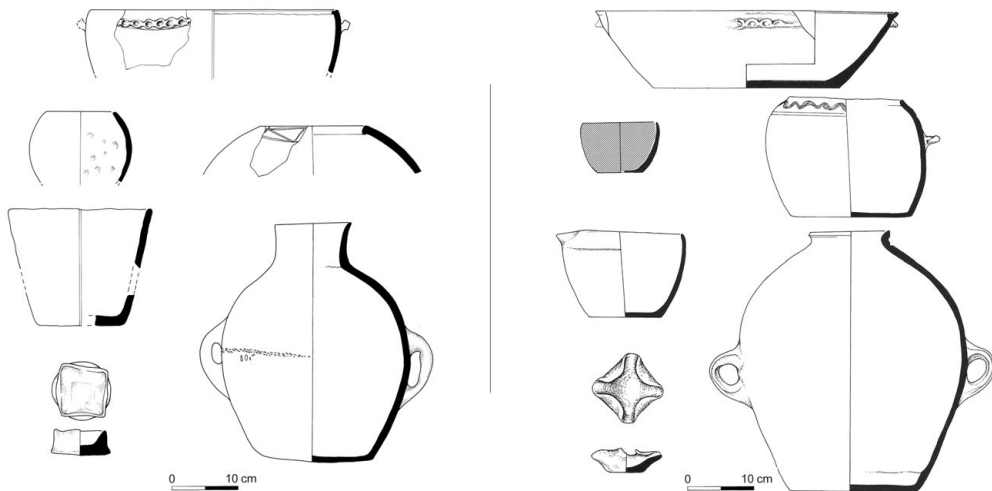


Figure 4.8 “Terminal EBA” pottery from Tel Bet Yerah, Period E (left), and IBA pottery from Sha'ar Hagolan (right). After Greenberg and Eisenberg 2006: figs. 5.96–5.99; Eisenberg 2012: figs. 41–47. Reproduced by permission of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

characterized by a limited repertoire of forms – two types of bowls (round- and straight-walled), one beaker, two types of cooking pots (holemouth and necked), two of jars (small and large) and four-spouted lamps. All were entirely handmade, with many closed vessels showing evidence of having been pressed into a mold. There was no slip or burnish, and the only decoration was a strip of rope-molding along the bowl rims or at the join between body and neck on large jars and incised lines on holemouth rims. Lost in transition were core EB III techniques (wheel finish, red slips, pattern burnish, painted designs) and forms (platters, combed jars and pithoi, jugs).

The assemblage recovered from the floors of the large village of Sha'ar Hagolan, about 4 kilometers southeast of Bet Yerah, represents the final abandonment of the site, which may be assumed to have occurred several generations after that of Bet Yerah. Based on the same core types as the Bet Yerah group – two bowl types, beakers, holemouth and necked pots, jars and four-spouted lamps, the Sha'ar Hagolan potter added a few minor types (particularly in the amphoriskos category) but, more pointedly, reestablished several EBA techniques – tournette formation, red slip and paint, combing – and added some new IBA flourishes – the folded “envelope” ledge handle; the wide, flat base; the sliced rim; and pie-crust decoration. The emphasis on pouring and drinking vessels was now marked, with strong parallels in EB IVA Syria.⁷⁰

The Sha'ar Hagolan assemblage is generally comparable to the comprehensive village assemblage from 'Ein el-Hilu. However, the latter shows a broader range of types and, in addition to locally made wares, contains artifacts from distant ceramic workshops with well-established traditions – e.g., trickle-painted vessels from the Jordan Valley and isolated artifacts from the Lebanese Bīqā' or beyond it. It may therefore be permissible to posit a gradual development in the IBA ceramic industries in the northern valley regions, beginning with the post-urban household manufacturing of Period E at Tel Bet Yerah, continuing with the emergence of specialized village workshops such as that of Sha'ar Hagolan and 'Ein el-Hilu, and culminating in the emergence of distinct regional styles. These would have enabled ceramics to acquire added significance in the context of reciprocal exchange, signaling their origin and possibly their biographies – who made, handled, owned and exchanged them – and hence their social value.

Still in the northern valleys, the typologically and technologically distinct black wheelmade ware (BWW) encapsulates the ceramic interface between the urban aspect of the Syrian Levant and the more southerly region. The BWW assemblage consists entirely of vessels used for the mixing, distribution and consumption of liquids: bottles and kraters, teapots and cups. The vessels were made of fine clay (well-levigated Lower Cretaceous clays of the type previously used for EBA Metallic wares) and turned on a slow wheel, allowing them to attain a high level of delicacy and symmetry. Their dark coloring was attained by reductive firing, and they were decorated with white bands, often

scrabbled to reveal the dark surface beneath them. BWW was found in considerable quantities in upper Jordan Valley sites (particularly at Hazor), and in tombs in the Jezreel, Jordan and Biqua' Valleys. All their components can be shown to have Syrian antecedents, but the peculiar combination and technique make them a distinct regional type that straddles the interface between the urban and non-urban potting traditions.⁷¹ Other regional industries of the northern valleys include the trickle-painted vessels of the middle Jordan Valley (both east and west of the river) and the Upper Galilee/Hula Valley industry.⁷² Each of these, as well as numerous regional industries in areas farther to the southwest, shows its own set of peculiarities and preferences (painted decoration in the first group, pinched mouths and stippled decoration in the second, and so on), placed within a shared typological framework.

In Transjordan, where the transition from EB III was less accentuated, in social terms, than in the west, the old red-slipped tradition was carried over to the IBA, with only slight changes in form seen in the earliest phase (this is best seen in the red-slipped vessels of Transjordanian origin, on the cusp between EB III and the IBA, found in early IBA sites of the Negev; see below). Soon, however, regional styles become more clearly articulated, and the red-slipped wares of Kh. Iskandar, for example, are quite distinct from those of other sites.⁷³

The "southern" facies of IBA pottery, which extends from the central hill region to the Negev and along the south-central coastal plain, is perhaps the most widespread regional style. It presents a typically sandy external aspect, verging to green in some coastal industries, and rarely carries any vestiges of painted decoration, but only occasional stippled, combed or incised patterns. Sloping-shouldered jars with vestigial "envelope" ledge handles, or without handles, are the most common ceramic artifact, as well as similarly shaped amphoriskoi. Also prominent are ridged bowls, teapots/teapot amphoriskoi and cups, four-spouted lamps and sliced-rim holemouth pots. Rope-decorated pithoi occur in the south, as well as in other regional industries, achieving a quite extraordinary size in some cases – evidence of the agricultural settings of the ceramic industries. As in the northern valleys, village workshops proliferated in the central hill and coastal regions, allowing for variation and invention within the broad outlines of the southern/coastal tradition.

THE SEMIARID AND ARID MARGINS (NEGEV AND SINAI)

Hundreds of surveyed sites and scores of excavations in IBA sites of the Negev and Sinai portray a vivid picture of desert settlement, resource extraction, and trade. The excavations suggest that the dynamics of settlement in the semi-arid margins are, in part, an extension of IBA Mediterranean-zone dynamics and new economic opportunities, and in part an expression of the terminal stage of the long-lived, local Timnian tradition.⁷⁴ While old theories attributing Negev

settlement to nomadic invasions of Amorites from Syria or “kurgan folk” from the southern Caucasus⁷⁵ cannot be sustained, the possibility of long-distance mobility and cultural transmission along the southern and eastern margins of the Mediterranean zone should not be ignored.

The bulk of the survey and excavation of the Negev Highlands sites was conducted as part of the military redeployment of the IDF following the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai in 1979–1982, and summarized in publications by Cohen and Haiman.⁷⁶ Only recently has interest in these sites been rekindled, with the extended publication of the Be’er Resisim excavations and some new interpretive work by Rosen, Saidel and an interdisciplinary team that has sampled some previously excavated sites.⁷⁷

It was suggested earlier that the site of Har Yeroham might be considered the southernmost instance of IBA agricultural settlement, utilizing a favorable niche in the Yeroham basin. The typical sites of the Negev Highlands do not show the same rectilinear architecture, and can be grouped into large clustered sites of irregular shape, small clustered sites, large sites composed of many round structures that are only occasionally grouped together, and sites composed of rooms built around the perimeter of large corrals, resembling – and sometimes reinhabiting – pastoral sites of the EBA (Figure 4.9). Most of the sites, including the three or four largest ones, occupy a band that stretches across the northern part of the highlands and onward toward northern Sinai.

Largest is ‘En Ziq, with more than 200 structures covering about 2 hectares on a terrace above a seasonal stream, a short distance away from the oasis of ‘En Ziq and ‘En Shaviv. Mash’abei Sadeh also numbers about 200 structures, built on a narrow ridge, while the hilltop site of Be’er Resisim contained about eighty structures of the same type as the other two sites. We will focus on ‘En Ziq and Be’er Resisim, which were both extensively excavated.

‘En Ziq was built on a broad terrace overlooking a seasonal riverbed, at a point where the high water table allowed easy access to subsurface runoff from the nearby springs.⁷⁸ Its numerous huts were built on two broad steps, bordered by scarps on the north and south, and by a stone fence on the west. Scores of structures were excavated, mainly on the upper terrace, and all may be considered a single type: circular or subcircular huts, partly dug into the soil and lined with fieldstones or stone slabs. Each hut had a central pillar, built of several cylindrical stones, and a single entrance facing south or east (unless constrained by a neighboring structure). Most of the huts were independent structures, but occasionally two to five huts could be grouped around a shared fenced courtyard. A few stone bins and mortars were found in the houses, as well as traces of tree branches used to construct the roof. Ceramic and other finds were abundant at ‘En Ziq, but their distribution seems to be patterned: most of the complete vessels come from about fifteen rooms in the north-central part of the site, which may therefore have been the last to be abandoned. Several lumps of asphalt were discovered in one of these rooms, as well

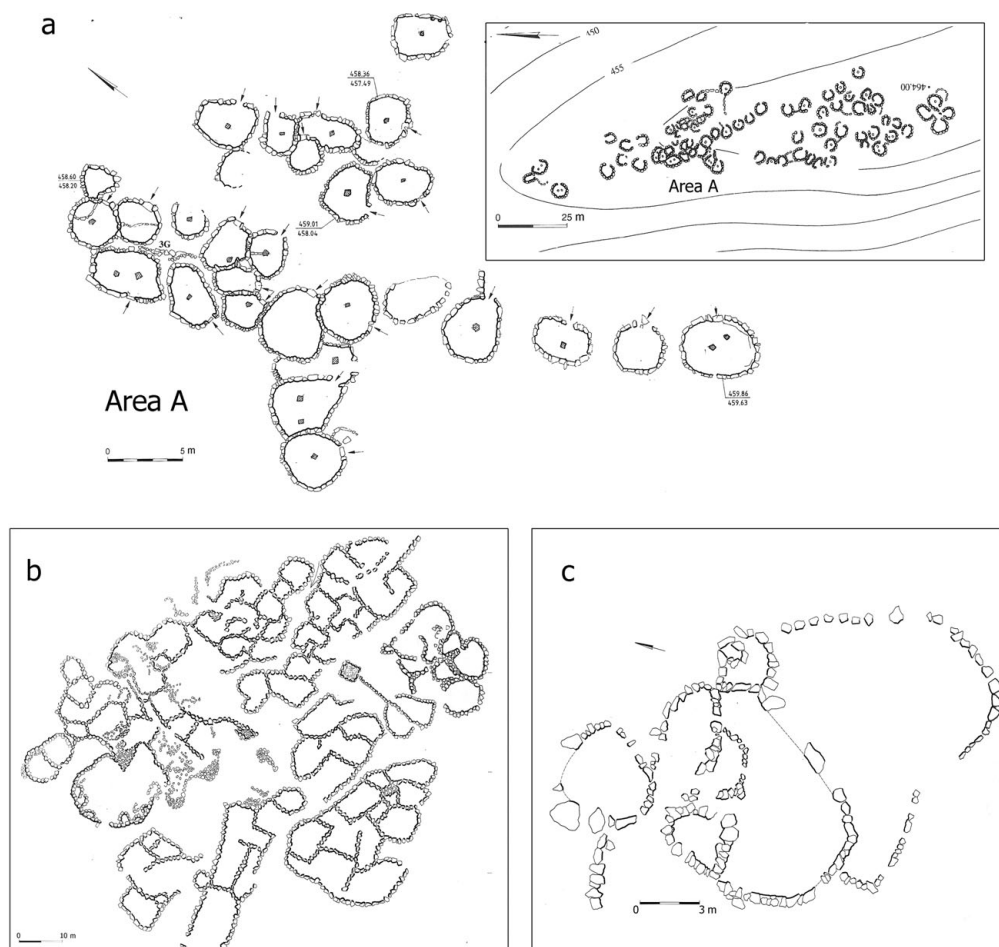


Figure 4.9 Three types of Negev Highlands settlements: (a) Be'er Resisim, (b) Nahal Nizzana and (c) Be'er Ratav. After Cohen 1999: figs. 62, 123, 128, 129. Reproduced by permission of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

as a cache of twelve complete and thirty-one fragmentary copper ingots, secreted in an early-abandoned room in the same sector. Other finds include some pounders and mortars, a few flint and copper tools, and a couple of copper weapons, but nothing that can be associated with agricultural production. Combined radiocarbon and OSL dating of deposits from early-abandoned parts of the site point to a relatively early date for 'En Ziq, in the first half of the IBA, with a possible reoccupation late in the IBA.

Be'er Resisim, a twice-published excavation,⁷⁹ is substantially the same as 'En Ziq in concept and content, but differs in execution, most likely due to its location and lithology. The eighty huts of this site are huddled together on a narrow, rocky ridge, a few hundred meters away from the small Well of the Dewdrops, after which the site is named (Figure 4.9). As the structures could not be sunk into the ground, the Be'er Resisim shelters are somewhat more

robust than those of 'En Ziq, often incorporating substantial boulders and monolithic doorjambs and central pillars. Numerous flat limestone slabs are understood to have been used as roof tiles, resting on a frame of tree branches. Be'er Resisim seems to have had a somewhat longer settlement history than 'En Ziq, resulting in the filling-up of spaces between structures through the addition of rooms and fences. This led both excavators to posit the existence of household clusters, and even of polygamous family compounds, at this site. Unfortunately, the finds recovered at Be'er Resisim cannot support the permanent or seasonal presence of families at the site, as the site was fully abandoned and scavenged, before being left to the elements. The fragmentary ceramic assemblage is virtually identical to that of 'En Ziq, and non-ceramic finds include stone mortars, pounders and two copper ingots. As at 'En Ziq, there are no animal pens in or around the site. The faunal assemblages of both 'En Ziq and Be'er Resisim are dominated by sheep/goat, with evidence for some small-scale hunting or trapping at Be'er Resisim. The age profile of the sheep/goat consumed at Be'er Resisim is consistent with secondary-product herd management.⁸⁰ Radiocarbon dates on ostrich-egg shells from Be'er Resisim provided a relatively early date, in the twenty-seventh to twenty-fifth century BCE, which is nonetheless broadly compatible with the 'En Ziq dates.

Provenience studies of ceramics from 'En Ziq and Be'er Resisim, as well as several contemporary sites in the Negev, reveals a truly remarkable diversity of ceramic sources (Figure 4.10).⁸¹ At both sites, ceramics originating in central and southern Transjordan account for 50–60 percent of the total samples studied (a bias toward the sampling of red-slipped wares, some of which could date to EB III, has probably inflated the true proportion, in this case), with the remainder being split between the Judean hills, the central Negev (most likely, the Har Yeroham workshop) and the northern Negev or southern plains. All the other sites sampled show a dominance of imported ceramics, either from the north or the east, with the only exception being Har Yeroham, which – at least for a time – modeled itself on the sedentary, agricultural villages of the north and produced its own pottery.

The above sites may be contrasted with the typical traditional desert settlements, whose character had changed very little since Neolithic times (hence their inclusion under the rubric of “terminal Timnian”). Excavations at one of the smaller sites at the western margins of the highlands, Rogem Be'erotayim, recovered a small and uniform ceramic assemblage, comprised largely of hole-mouth vessels, storage jars and, significantly, cups.⁸² The lithic assemblage was the product of a local ad hoc flake industry, and had a large component of microdrills, probably used in bead production. Mammal bones indicate the consumption of mature sheep and goats, probably raised for their secondary products. The presence of wild species indicates local procurement of food, while a few fish bones point to exchange of foodstuffs, perhaps with travelers

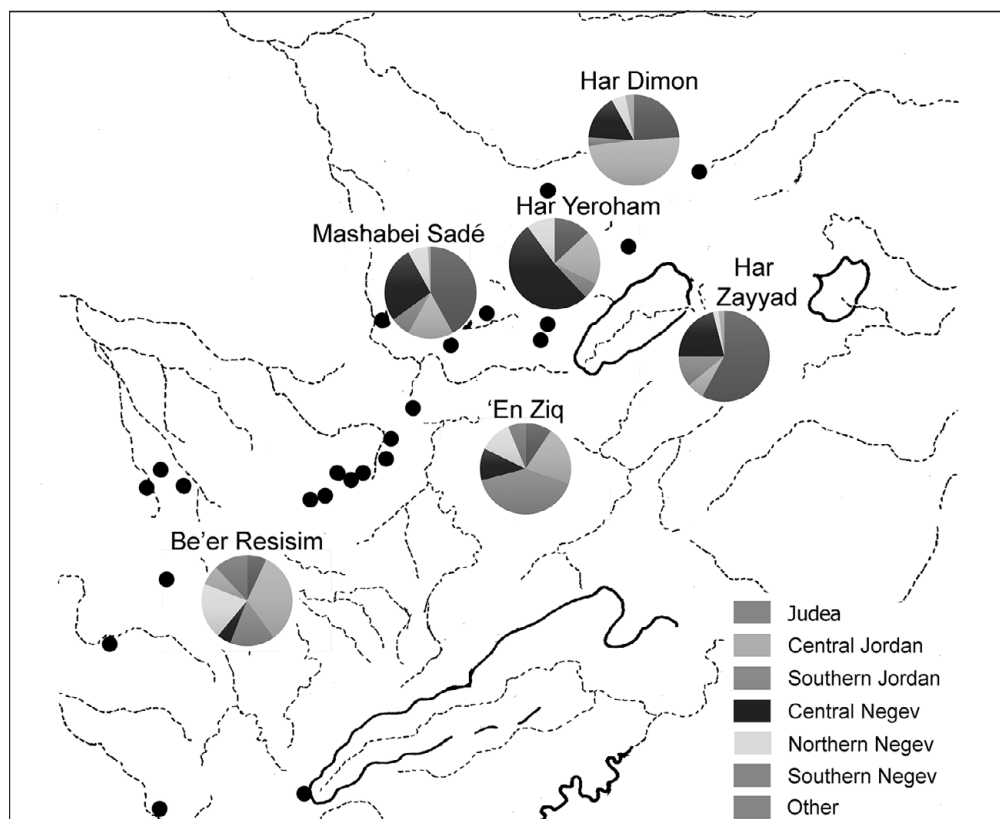


Figure 4.10 Y. Goren's analysis of the provenience of IBA pottery from six Negev Highlands sites. Redrawn after Goren 1996: fig. 8.

along the north–south and east–west interregional routes that pass near the site. A study of butchering marks on the bones indicated the use of stone tools only, and no copper tools were found in the excavation.

'En Ziq, Be'er Resisim and other sites of the same type (such as Mash'abei Sadeh, Mezudat Har Zayyad and Nahal Boqer) thus stand out as implants in the IBA settlement landscape, differing from the myriad small sites in the long-standing Timnian tradition, on the one hand, and from isolated attempts to establish agricultural outposts, like Har Yeroḥam, on the other. They had no productive capacity, but were avid consumers of local (food) and imported (ceramic) resources. These, clearly, are not the permanent agricultural settlements proposed by Cohen, nor the pastoral-nomadic campsites proposed by Dever. Rather, they have the character of boomtowns – rapidly built and soon abandoned – that appear in conjunction with the discovery or development of previously untapped resources. Haiman was the first to suggest that the rapid rise of these settlements should be associated with the rise of an organized copper trade between the Arabah Valley and Egypt, at a time when Egypt was entering a period of political uncertainty, the First Intermediate Period, which could have

been viewed as a period of opportunity for non-state actors. In this view, some of the secondary processing of metal ores into small ingots occurred at the large “permanent” sites in the central highlands. The ingots could then be distributed westwards, toward the main market for copper in Egypt, or northward, to the secondary Levantine market, where they would be converted into finished products. Yekutieli, who excavated an IBA smelting site at ‘En Yahav, about 30 kilometers east of the ore sources in Wadi Feinan, seconded Haiman, while proposing that the highland sites represent a tool-production zone within the Arabah–Negev metallurgical complex.⁸³ The main relevant production site in Wadi Feinan is Khirbet Hamra Ifdan (KHI), which has already been described in Chapter 3 as an EB III site, and indeed the main phase of activity at KHI is the earlier phase, which spans the twenty-sixth to twenty-fifth centuries and which has a ceramic inventory that lacks IBA characteristics. It is this phase that produced casting molds for pins, axes and ingots, which could indeed have been sent westward to the first settlers in the highland sites (Figure 4.11).⁸⁴ However, the phase in which typical IBA pottery appears at KHI and to which the ‘En Yahav site is radiometrically dated falls at the very end of the IBA, in the twenty-first century BCE. The early phase, when KHI was at the height of its activity and produced its own ingots and finished products, cannot be correlated with the First Intermediate Period, nor can a market or a route for Arabah copper to Egypt be substantiated for the twenty-fifth century. Thus, faced with chronological inconsistencies and the lack of direct evidence for metalworking in the highlands, the “copper boom” theory for the large Negev settlements lacks a convincing context, and thus fares little better than earlier theories.

Still, a small line in copper could have been part of a different economic mechanism that attracted hundreds of colonists from Transjordan and the



Figure 4.11 Stone molds for copper axes and ingots and copper ingots from the earlier phase of Kh. Hamra Ifdan. Courtesy of T. E. Levy.

southern plains and hills to the Negev Highlands. If we zoom out from the local desert dynamics, as we must, to accommodate the evidence for interregional movement of goods and people, one of the most significant changes in the global Near Eastern economy was occurring some distance to the north, in western Syria. There, as noted earlier, Ebla and neighboring states were emerging as political and economic powerhouses, resting on the two pillars of dry-farming and sheep-herding.⁸⁵ Wool had become a commodity, textile production was institutionalized, and the production of wool and hides features regularly in mid-third-millennium texts.⁸⁶ The sheer numbers of sheep required for the palatial economy of Ebla alone would have required management of herds situated outside the farming lands, in the semi-arid margins, well away from the urban centers.⁸⁷ The evidence for Syrian cultural impact on the southern Levant, whether in the ceramic inventory and the consumption habits associated with it or in symbolic artifacts such as the ‘Ain Samiya cup (see the box below on “The ‘Ain Samiya Goblet”) or the nude figurine from Jebel Qa‘aqr, speaks to the possibility of an economic knock-on effect as well: the incorporation of pastoral economies of the southern Levant into the global textile economy centered in western Syria. Wool production had never been prominent in south Levantine EB III towns, if we may judge by the lack of evidence for weaving at these sites. EBA herds were managed mainly for their meat supply. Now, for the first time, wool- and hide-producing herds were to be managed as an economic venture, rather than as a mode of subsistence, and this could be best effected outside the agricultural zone, along the eastern margins and in the Negev Highlands. The Negev Highlands “boomtowns” were thus the product of economic entrepreneurship, which would have included the raising of large herds by the traditional desert pastoralists, augmented with settled-zone pastoralists, and either

- (1) the transport of some these herds northward, on the hoof, on an eastern route through the Transjordanian plateau to the Hauran and thence to the edges of the areas of direct interaction with Syrian urban economies, or on a western route along the traditional coastal and valley route, or
- (2) the shipment of wool and hides from the processing sites in the Negev, either along an eastern route, with the aid of mobile intermediaries who straddled the Syrian and south Levantine pasturelands, or a western route, linked to the coastal sites and the still-extant Byblos maritime route.⁸⁸

This hypothesis may be the most parsimonious explanation for *all* the elements comprising the IBA settlement surge in the Negev.

THE LIVING DEAD

More than 100 shaft-tomb cemeteries and untold numbers of above-ground mortuary monuments have made the IBA a byword in the study of Levantine mortuary practice (and in the annals of antiquities looting, which thrives on the

gifts interred with the dead). Shaft tombs and shaft-tomb cemeteries have been excavated along the rift valley, from the Dead Sea to the Bika', in the Jezreel Valley, along the Mediterranean coast, in the Galilean and central hills (especially the central and southern zones) and in the Transjordanian plateau. Major cemeteries include those near the mounds of Jericho, Megiddo, Bet Shean, Lachish, 'Ajjul and Bab edh-Dhra';⁸⁹ coastal cemeteries at Azor, Yehud, Bet Dagan, Ma'abarot and 'Ein Assawir;⁹⁰ Jordan Valley cemeteries at Hagosherim, Tel 'Amal, Tiwal ash-Sharqi and Wadi al-Hammah;⁹¹ and the central hill cemeteries of 'Ain Samiya/Dhahr Mirzbaneh, el-Jib, Efrata, Kirmil and Jebel Qa'aqir.⁹² Tumulus and dolmen cemeteries attributed to the IBA are found in the Golan and Upper Galilee, in the Carmel range, along the eastern side of the rift valley and in the Negev Highlands.⁹³

The seeming disparity between extensive cemeteries and an impoverished settlement landscape gave rise to many social and historical models that viewed the IBA as a period of widespread nomadization.⁹⁴ People who were constantly on the move, it was thought, would become sedentary, hence visible, only at death. But we have already seen that IBA people are not, in fact, so elusive, especially if one looks away from the great mounds. Moreover, because the IBA accorded much effort to individual interments, the numbers of the dead are less overwhelming than might have been expected from the sheer number of tombs. In fact, the prominence of IBA tombs and mortuary assemblages is more an economic than a demographic fact: IBA tombs indeed involved a remarkable expenditure of energy on thousands of subterranean shaft and chamber tombs and above-ground tumuli and dolmens, but the prevalence of individual adult burials, at the expense of collective burials, which are rare, translates into a relatively small population of IBA people in tombs, when compared with other burial-rich periods, such as the EB IB or MBA. Thus, at Jericho, about 350 adults and 20 subadults (based on counts by Kenyon and Greenery)⁹⁵ were interred in about 360 tombs, presumably over two or three centuries. By way of comparison, in three burial caves alone of the late EB I there were remains of 420 individuals.⁹⁶ Significantly, all IBA burials took place outside the settlements, in designated cemeteries. Thus, mortuary treatment and ceremony were more about the reinforcement of communal claims to land and to memory, and less about the reintegration of the dead into the community.

Several attempts have been made to create a typology of IBA tombs, focusing on their technical characteristics.⁹⁷ The resulting distribution maps are instructive of the variety of approaches taken throughout the region – Z. Greenhut identified fourteen tomb types – and even at individual sites, with Jericho, home to several different tomb-cutting practices, being an oft-studied case in point.⁹⁸ But the distribution of tomb-types has yet to be successfully correlated with any other significant characterization of the communities in question. Those seeking chronological resolution for the 400-year period can

show no convincing chronological seriation, while the attributions of differences to cultural origin or social standing falter on the arbitrary determinations required to define values such as status and wealth, and on the absence both of bio-archaeological data and of secure comparative assemblages in the living communities that could be associated with the cemeteries.

A focus on the tombs as places of commemoration, of the negotiation of social status and of territorial precedence – that is, on the *how* of mortuary practice rather than on the *why* – might provide a more informative window into IBA communities and into their social priorities, especially in relation to the preceding and succeeding periods. This focus can be achieved by considering significant choices made during the mortuary process itself; that is, under what terms were the departed required to successfully (and permanently) complete the passage from the world of the living to that of the dead, and the survivors to complete the transformation, in their minds, of living presence into memory. In the wake of several centuries during which the communal commemoration of the dead was suppressed by urbanizing ideologies, mortuary traditions had virtually to be reinvented by IBA people. They had two surviving templates to draw upon: the megalith and tumulus tradition maintained by mobile populations, mainly in the semi-arid margins, and the collective cave-burial tradition that had survived only in the rift valley, between Jericho and the southeastern Dead Sea plain. Placing the megalithic cist tomb and the cave tomb at the two extremes of the mortuary spectrum (individualizing and visible, vs. collective and subterranean), the variations in IBA mortuary practice can all be placed on a continuum between them, often combining or negotiating between their chief attributes. Whatever their choices, it can hardly be doubted that IBA people put a premium on the presencing of the dead, restoring the power of ancestors in their post-urban landscape.

Type A, Individualizing Tombs

A recurring category that cuts across regions and grave or tomb types is the singular, articulated male dagger-burial (these are nearly always single burials, but the occasional double burial is included in this category, as it represents a single event of inhumation). The clearest performance of this type of interment can be seen in stone-lined cist or chamber tombs excavated at Tell el-‘Ajjul.⁹⁹ In these tombs, most of which were oriented to the east, an articulated male skeleton was placed in a fetal position on its right side, with a dagger at its waist. Accompanying finds could include a jar, cuts of meat or personal ornaments. These tombs were sealed with large slabs and never reentered, though they were probably visible on the surface. Similar constructed, slab-roofed cist tombs were excavated at Tiwal ash-Sharqi in the eastern Jordan Valley,¹⁰⁰ and as noted by Tubb, they seem to be derived from above-ground

cairns with central cists, of the type prevalent along the rift valley and in the hilly regions and excavated, for example, at Ramat Hanadiv, at the southern tip of the Carmel range (Figure 4.12).¹⁰¹ At that site – a mid-third-millennium seasonal burial site associated with transhumant pastoralists – about forty burial cairns were identified, all oriented toward the setting sun. Three of the twenty excavated tombs contained weapons – a dagger and two mace heads – but no other artifacts. Other members of this class might include circle dolmens of the northern Jordan Valley and the adjacent plateaus, both east and west; tumuli in the central hills; and some of the Negev Highlands tumuli.¹⁰² In all cases, burials were a singular event, probably conducted soon after death, but they created a highly visible mark in the landscape that could serve as the focus of commemorative performances, attract additional burials and signal territorial claims.¹⁰³

Sharing most of the attributes of the built graves are the “dagger” and “composite” shaft tombs of the Jericho necropolis, as defined by Kathleen Kenyon.¹⁰⁴ The former are small tombs where articulated adult skeletons (all male, when identified), placed on their right side, are provided with daggers and an occasional personal ornament, but no pottery (Figure 4.12). The latter are like the “dagger” tombs, but they contain pottery and additional items of personal adornment. The “dagger” tombs, differing in size and content from all other tombs at Jericho, occupy a defined portion of the cemetery, but they do not seem to have been marked above-ground. The use of chamber tombs for a one-off ceremony is perplexing, since the point of having a sealed, accessible chamber is to allow periodic reentry (see below). But the concentration of these tombs in a specific zone within the cemetery suggests that their inhabitants were all considered peers, and that – as in the case of cairn-fields and other cemeteries composed of marked graves (including modern ones) – the relevant reference group is the entire community, rather than the immediate kin of the deceased. Thus, rather than *patresfamilias*, the men in question were perceived (or at least presented) as “pillars of the community.”

A significant attribute of these tombs is their pronounced gender identification, underscored by the interment of a dagger, worn at the waist, often to the exclusion of anything but a few items of personal adornment. All the daggers that have been analyzed in this class of burial proved to have been made of copper alloy, containing 1–5 percent arsenic.¹⁰⁵ Since local copper, familiar from the Wadi Arabah production sites and the Negev Highlands ingots, contains only traces of arsenic, the presence of arsenical alloys suggests input from northern copper sources. The daggers therefore carried added value, as exotic items obtained by way of extended networks of exchange or by dint of long-distance travel. Their interment at the waist of the men who wore them points to their being inalienable objects that could not be separated from their owners without risk of offending them, even after death. In other words, they were, in life, a determinant of identity or parts of a new entity – “a man with a

fine dagger” (often characterized as a warrior) – that is no longer reducible to its components,¹⁰⁶ and, in death, a fitting gift that ensured the maintenance of mutual obligations between the living and the dead.

Type B, Communal Tombs

The archetype for the IBA communal tomb is the remarkable group of multichambered shaft tombs from Megiddo and Hazorea'.¹⁰⁷ Typically, these tombs have a quatrefoil plan, with a square shaft on one side leading to a square central chamber that provides access to three rectangular chambers, one on each side. Since the Megiddo tombs were all compromised by later use in antiquity, the comparable tombs at Hazorea', sealed in antiquity, might help illustrate their use. In Tomb 3, the largest and best preserved of the tombs at Hazorea', no articulated skeletal remains were found, but only numerous bone fragments that carpeted the central room and extended into the two lateral chambers, one of which was furnished with benches (Figure 2.12). Wide and deep troughs were cut into the floor of the lateral chambers and then covered with paving stones. Apart from a few pins, a copper knife, and a bead, finds consisted of a large collection of ceramics, among them thirty-eight jugs, thirty teapots, a cooking pot and several other containers, and several simple flint flake and blade tools. The other tombs at Hazorea', although smaller in size, yielded comparable finds. The surviving inventories at Megiddo are remarkably similar, with quantities of teapots and jugs, but very few other objects or personal effects of the departed.

There is little doubt that these tombs served as repositories for secondary interments but, more importantly, as places of periodic – perhaps even scheduled – commemorative performances that included the pouring-out of liquids into the carved troughs and the consumption of food and drink. The complete disintegration of the skeletal material should also be taken as intentional, as it is repeated in countless IBA tombs. It represents the final stage in a prolonged rite of passage for the departed that offers a sharp contrast to the Type A tombs: (1) primary defleshing (outside the tomb), (2) disarticulation and collection, (3) deposition in tomb and (4) fragmentation and mingling with ancestral remains. By the end of this process, the individual has been completely subsumed in the ancestral group and can no longer be identified.

Like the Type A individual monument, which finds its origin in long-standing commemorative practices of the marginal zones, the Type B collective hypogeum seems to be a concept shared across large parts of third millennium western Asia. A remarkable juxtaposition and continuous reformulation of these two approaches to commemoration occurs at Tell Banat, on the Syrian Euphrates, as discussed by Anne Porter.¹⁰⁸ There, massive above-ground burial monuments – the White Monument outside the mound and the Mortuary Monument on the mound – belong to the widespread practice, from the

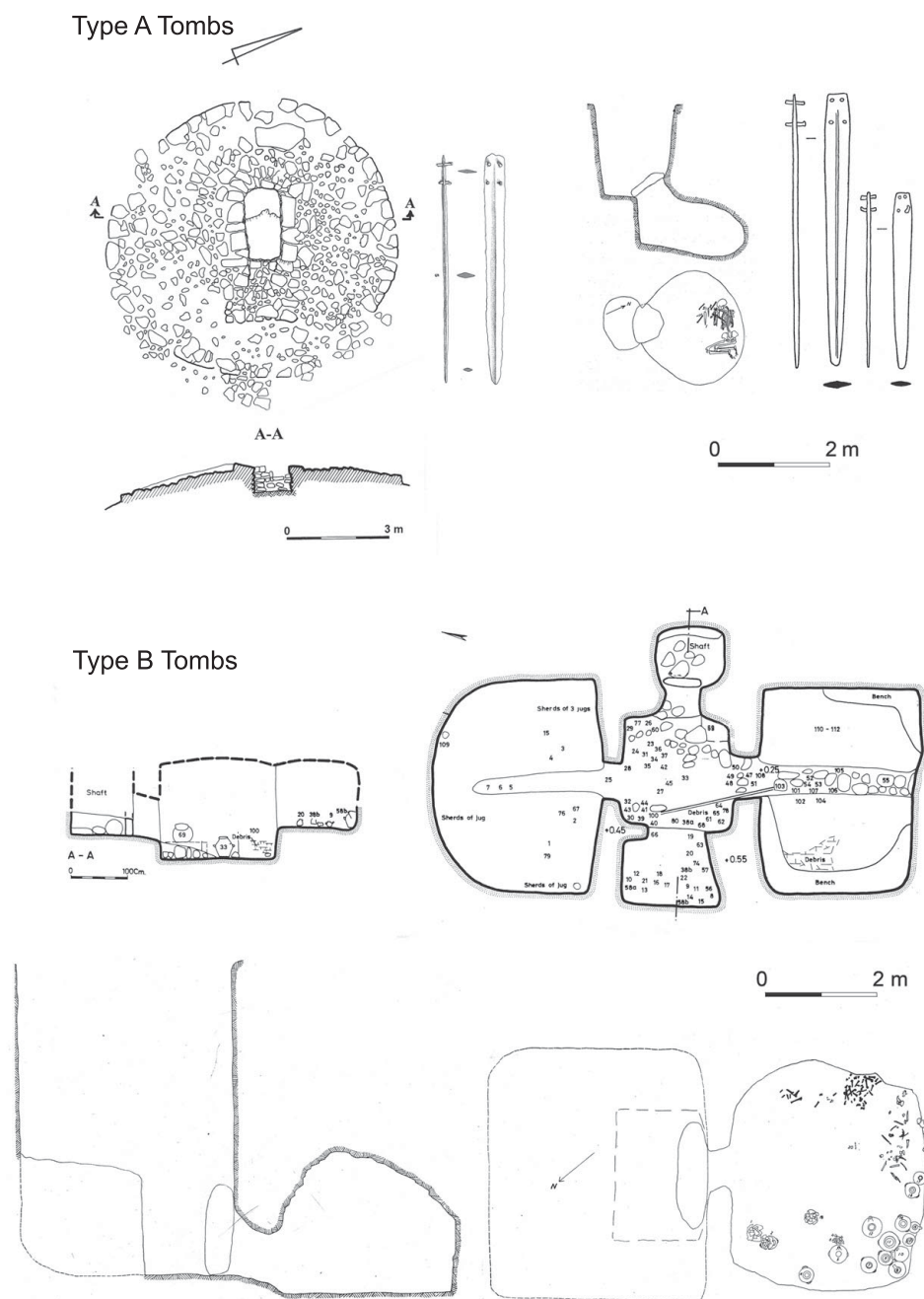


Figure 4.12 Type A individualizing tombs at Ramat Hanadiv (after Greenberg 2000: figs. 6, 11) and Jericho (after Kenyon 1965: figs 24, 26); daggers are scaled approximately 1:8. Type B collective tombs at Hazorea' (after Meyerhof 1989: figs. 7, 8) and Jericho (after Kenyon 1965: fig. 66). Jericho images reproduced by permission of the Council for British Research in the Levant.

Euphrates down to the Levant, of enabling the cohesion of far-flung pastoral societies by “the reproduction of territorial and descent-based relationships through ancestor burials contained in massive built structures,” while a remarkable, ashlar-built subterranean chamber tomb (Tomb 7), very similar in plan to the Megiddo and Hazorea tombs, represents the concentration of power with specific descent-lines in the same societies.

Most of the IBA tombs in the Levant can be placed on a spectrum between Type A – singular burials of prominent men – and Type B – communal tombs of nuclear or extended families. Closest to Type A are shaft tombs containing primary burials of males with daggers that provide evidence for a more extended ritual, or of several burial episodes. A relatively large, but damaged, cave excavated at Moza, near Jerusalem, contained one surviving supine burial, four jars, a tanged copper spearhead, two tin bronze daggers, copper studs and a decorated copper belt (?).¹⁰⁹ It seems likely that this cave was entered more than once. Tomb 1 at Horshim, on the coastal plain, contained three primary burials, one of which was provided with a tin bronze dagger.¹¹⁰

A different approach, also related to Type A burials, is the extension of the single-interment shaft tomb concept to entire cemeteries. This approach characterizes several cemeteries in the central coastal zone, in the Yarkon and Ayyalon River basins, where large numbers of shaft tombs were found, each containing a single primary interment of a man, woman or child, provided with a nearly identical “burial kit,” usually comprised of a jar, a cup and a lamp.¹¹¹ These individual tombs are only slightly removed from the simple pit tombs that characterize the coastal region in the second millennium BCE, suggesting that the physical affordances of the coastal lithology might have affected the choice of burial patterns. In such cemeteries, the uniform personal inventories underscore the collective ethos: all the interred belong to the community as a whole, rather than to their immediate kin.

Several tombs combine the concepts of individual and communal burial. Two slab-lined shaft tombs at Deganya, just south of Tel Bet Yerah, seem to have been family tombs.¹¹² The better-preserved of the two contained six primary burials – three adult males, an elderly female and two children – accompanied by a single spouted pot and three daggers, one of them of made of tin bronze.

A bilobate tomb at ‘Enan contained, in one chamber, a single adult male in primary articulation, accompanied by five daggers, apparently all of tin-bronze, a whetstone, a spearhead, an arrowhead, three copper pins, and ceramic lamps, amphoriskoi, jars and cooking pots.¹¹³ In the second chamber there were two adult males, one adult female, a child and an infant. Here too, the males were provided with daggers and a whetstone, and the female with rings, bracelets and a 49.5-centimeter-long toggle pin. Ceramics here included cups, teapots and broad-spouted pouring vessels, or *askoi*, in addition to the other types. A trough between the two chambers contained, among other things, a group of spearheads.

There are several additional examples of tombs with multiple primary burials where males were provided with daggers – often of tin bronze that could have been obtained only in Syria – but were interred alongside others, in tombs that were clearly reentered periodically and which served as a venue of rituals that included pouring and consumption of beverages.¹¹⁴ These tombs thus combine abbreviated mortuary treatment of the deceased with more extended familial commemoration within the tomb. While these tombs accord males “warrior” status, the tombs at Tel ‘Amal illustrate the reopening of tombs for additional burials and for commemorative meals, without gender differentiation among the primary interments, which remained intact.¹¹⁵ Tombs of this type are thus further removed from Type A, moving closer to Type B.

Most shaft tombs in the hill regions and the interior valleys belong to cemeteries containing scores or hundreds of shaft tombs, usually clustered on hillslopes in discrete groups that betray a degree of planning and institutional memory. The phenomenon of empty tombs has been recorded in several cases, and a detailed study of one of Jericho’s standard tombs revealed that it had lain open and unused for weeks before it was put into use.¹¹⁶ This can be taken as evidence of preparation for burial in the context of the “long” mortuary treatment that we have associated with Type B communal tombs. In most of these tombs there are fragmentary skeletal remains, nearly always representing only a small part of the original skeleton, belonging to one or two persons. But there are nearly always outliers that are larger than the others, or that contain remains of several persons or greater quantities of ceramic containers (Figure 2.12, bottom). Often, tombs show clear signs of reentry such as the repeated use of lamps, placed in lamp niches, the rearrangement of finds within the tombs, the introduction of food remains or various modifications of the shaft (such as the addition of incised graffiti).¹¹⁷ These and other variations have been cited as evidence of status disparity and display in IBA society,¹¹⁸ but if so, it is only limited disparity, of the same order as that exhibited between larger and smaller households in the settlements. Where there were more family members available to assist in the preparation of the tomb, or more participants in, or iterations of, the burial rites, we may find larger tombs or bigger inventories. The ‘Enan tomb described above, with its rich cache of exotic weapons, personal ornaments and serving vessels, might be the only clear-cut display of conspicuous consumption in the IBA mortuary contexts.

Broadly speaking, the huge cemeteries in the middle and southern zones of the central hills (e.g., ‘Ain Samiya/Dhahr Mirzbaneh, with 1,100 tombs, and Kirmil, with 850) have a preponderance of single or double disarticulated inhumations in shaft tombs, seemingly truncating the full Type B treatment before the final step of “mingling with the ancestors.” This would indicate that the collective identity, represented by all those interred in each cemetery, was still a powerful force, competing with the familial one. Greenhut has suggested

that each of these cemeteries was marked by a hilltop tumulus or cultic platform, such as indeed have been excavated at Efrata, Dhahr Mirzbaneh and Jebel Qa'aqir.¹¹⁹ Such installations would have served both as a visible marker of the subsurface tombs on the hillslopes and as a possible venue for the pre-burial rites. Evidence of a different kind of setting for collective mortuary rites comes from Qedesh, in the Upper Galilee, where a huge collection of pottery, including numerous cooking vessels, lamps and drinking sets was found along with a small number of human and animal bones in an artificial cave that was provided with a central trough and a modeled pillar, in which a shelf and niche were carved.¹²⁰ These seem to be remnants of mortuary feasts, perhaps associated with the collection and redistribution of bones of the dead in the process of secondary interment.

The negotiation evident in the mortuary practices of the IBA, between those typically associated with mobile populations (Type A) and those typically associated with sedentary village agriculturalists (Type B), must reflect the revived importance of these two modes of post-urban existence, which had been suppressed during the first half of the millennium, and the interpenetration of values between them. The many local variations visible in cemeteries are doubtless a reflection of the length of the period, the diversity of regional identities (as expressed, for example, in the ceramic industries) and the fact that the mortuary tradition had to be reinvented after the EB II and III, when familial and tribal support structures were suppressed. The relative wealth of finds in the tombs – especially of precious metal weapons and personal ornaments – is a reminder of the retreat from the urbanizing economies of accumulation and commodity production, and a return to an economy in which the mutual fulfillment of obligations – including those of the living to the dead – was of paramount importance.

SUMMARY: THE LONG INTERMEDIATE BRONZE AGE

With many fortified centers abandoned by 2500 BCE, and the few settled towns hanging on for only a few decades more, the south Levantine countryside (and a good part of the central Levantine coast as well) had completed its transformation into a post-urban landscape by 2400 BCE, an orientation that was to last until 2000 BCE and beyond. Mounds and urban ruins were still prominent in the countryside, but the builders of the new settlements avoided them, for the most part, instead establishing small villages in the agricultural heartland as well as in marginal areas suited for agro-pastoral economic strategies. A very prominent mortuary culture, often encircling abandoned mounds, appears to represent lingering territorial claims of an earlier era. Cemeteries reproduced tribal or familial relationships and reestablished the centrality of ancestral claims; their prominence – and the concurrent absence

Table 4.1 Suggested matrix for IBA mortuary treatment, with the binary types at either end and the rest arranged on a continuum between them

<i>Prototype</i>	Type A Tombs				Type B Tombs			<i>Prototype</i>
Heads of clans in tumuli (e.g., Tell Banat [Syria]; Ramat Hanadiv?)	Cist tombs with male burial, weapon (e.g., Ajjul; Tiwal cists)	Male dagger shaft tombs (e.g., Jericho)	Primary burial chamber tombs, no weapon (e.g., Bet Dagan)	Repeated primary burials, in multiple- use tombs, with weapons (e.g., Moza)	Chamber tombs with repeated entry and individual status markers (e.g., 'Enan, Tel 'Amal)	Shaft-tomb cemeteries with one or two burials per chamber (e.g., 'Ain Samiya, Kirmil)	Shaft-tomb cemeteries with multiple burials (e.g., Jericho multiple type)	Communal hypogea (e.g., Megiddo, Hazorea' quatrefoil chamber tombs)
Primary Weapon	+	+	+	+	—	+	+	Secondary Ceremonial vessels
Individual Visibility	+	+	+	—	—	—	(+)	Collective Subterranean
Territoriality	(+) probable ?	—	—	—	+	+	+	Commemorative performance
			(+) extensive cemetery		+	—	(usually limited)	

of formal religious establishments – underscores the rejection by IBA people of the hierarchical structures of the late EBA.

Readjustments of synchronisms with neighboring regions allow us to associate prominent elements of IBA material culture with contemporary cities and states of Early Bronze IV Syria. These include prestige objects directly imported from the north (such as silver and bronze jewelry and weapons), Syrian-inspired ceramic technologies, and the emulation, in local technologies, of Syrian ceramic forms. Continuing work on the pastoral economy of Ebla and its neighbors indicates that wool and textiles were at the heart of the northwest Syrian economy, suggesting a knock-on effect in the Levantine margins that would have elevated the prestige of local potentates controlling large herds of sheep. The possible impact of climate deterioration in the last quarter of the third millennium on settlement in the southern Levant should be accommodated within this revised view of north–south Levantine interaction: drought would not have precipitated the onset of the IBA, but it could have had a role within it, and might be implicated in the early abandonment of Negev Highlands sites, in the first half of the period.

There can be little doubt that cultural preconceptions about the “inhospitable Negev desert” underlay the mid-twentieth-century archaeological reaction to the discovery of a dense network of IBA settlement across the Negev and Sinai highlands. While interruptions in the settlement history of virtually every geographical region and all but the most prominent tells of the Mediterranean zone did not seem to call for comment, the “unprecedented” spread of settlement in the IBA Negev and Sinai required a compelling external cause: for Albright and Glueck, it represented the tribal-nomadic milieu of the biblical patriarchs, descending – like them – from the north, in search of pasture and of trading routes;¹²¹ for Kenyon, it was evidence of EBA civilization overrun by Amorite nomads;¹²² Lapp, Kochavi and Aharoni also saw an invasion, but of kurgan-building nomads from the distant north;¹²³ and R. Cohen suggested that IBA settlement spread eastward from Sinai, and was later reimagined and retold as the Israelite exodus from Egypt.¹²⁴ None of these scenarios, each based on a kernel of evidence, has stood the test of time, as extensive surveys and off-tell excavations have piled up the evidence for significant rural settlement in the traditional, Mediterranean zones, while the arid-zone settlement proves, upon close examination, to have been short-lived and dependent on sedentary-zone settlement. Rather, it is the processual approach of Dever, Richard and especially Palumbo,¹²⁵ with its emphasis on rural resilience, that can best be squared with the evidence in hand, but with the following proviso: the village settlement of the Mediterranean zone, as a reinvented social form, was only indirectly related to the preceding EBA; rather, it is a product of a negotiation between surviving urban technologies, pre-existing non-urban groups, and incoming ideas spawned by mobility, trade and new economic opportunities. In spite of the seeming isolation and

parochiality of the villages and herders of the Levant during the latter centuries of the third millennium, the IBA was in fact a period of increased connectivity, when compared with the late EBA; without centers of their own, Levantine people seem to have been attuned to the nuances of cultural and political change in neighboring regions. It should therefore come as no surprise that, with the turn of the millennium, the transformations affecting northern and western Syria – what has there been termed the “regeneration” of urban society¹²⁶ – should have impinged on the central and southern Levant as well, as a new, Middle Bronze Age order was about to be established.

The ‘Ain Samiya Goblet

The ‘Ain Samiya goblet (Figure 4.13) is a diminutive silver cup with splayed sides and a flat base, similar in form to ceramic cups that occur, albeit rarely, in third-millennium assemblages of both the Early and Intermediate Bronze Ages. It was



Figure 4.13 The ‘Ain Samiya goblet. Redrawn by N. Earon after Yeivin 1971 and Israeli and Tadmor 1986: fig. 42.

found in an unremarkable shaft tomb of a type common in the central hills, together with a ceramic assemblage consisting entirely of cylindrical cups, two four-spouted lamps and three copper weapons. The external surface of the cup was occupied by a complex mythological tableau, executed in repoussé and chasing. Two scenes are depicted. In the scene conventionally depicted on the left, a figure with two human faces in profile, set atop a frontal human torso, which itself rests on two pairs of bulls' hindquarters, again in profile, and a small sun-disk, wards off a rearing serpent with a plant-like staff; in the scene conventionally shown to the right, two human figures clad in woolen garments hold a crescent-shaped object that appears to define a celestial sphere, in which a large human-featured sun-disk is shown, and a nether sphere, to which the serpent is relegated. The human faces, serpent and sun-disk are shared between the two scenes, which might therefore be interpreted to represent two sequential states within a single narrative. Yadin linked the tableau to the Mesopotamian creation myth. M. Tadmor expressed reservations about the linkage, while Carre-Gates (1986) proposed a Hurrian iconographic milieu for the vessel, with ultimate origins in the northern Caucasus.¹²⁷

The latter suggestion, along with Tadmor's observation that the cup was introduced into the tomb in an already-broken state, is intriguing. In the absence of a local context for the creation and formal use of a ceremonial object of this caliber, we must assume a long line of transmission – or an extended biography – for this object. There seem to be two options for such a biography: the Syro-Mesopotamian option would place the origin of the vessel in the late third millennium Syrian interaction sphere, linking it to the scenario that connects the Levantine IBA to the integration of peripheral groups into the textile economy of Ebla and neighboring city-states. The Caucasian option could point in a different direction: the 'Ain Samiya tomb is not too distant from the abandoned EBA town of 'Ai, where a temple, a shrine, and the presence of KKW producers/users were all recorded. The 'Ain Samiya cup may thus have originated in EB III 'Ai, to be eventually deposited as an heirloom in the nearby IBA cemetery.

NOTES

- 1 Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 233.
- 2 Lyonnet 2009; Mazzoni 2013; Schwartz 2017.
- 3 Wilkinson et al. 2014.
- 4 Bunimovitz and Greenberg 2006.
- 5 Glueck 1960; Albright 1961; Vogel 1975.
- 6 Wright 1938; Kenyon 1957; Tufnell 1958: 31; Amiran and Kochavi 1985.
- 7 E.g., Dever 1980; Richard 1980.
- 8 Novak and Rutishauser 2013.
- 9 Falconer and Fall 2016.
- 10 Dunseth et al. 2017.
- 11 Thalmann 2007; 2010; Regev et al. 2012; Hoffmayer et al. 2014; see Chapters 2, 3 and 5.

- 12 D'Andrea 2014: 153–169; Bechar 2015; Schwartz 2017.
- 13 Greenberg and Eisenberg 2006; Eisenberg 2012.
- 14 Dever 1973; D'Andrea 2014.
- 15 Weiss 2017, and numerous references therein.
- 16 Maher, Banning and Chazan 2011; Kennedy 2016; S.A. Rosen 2017.
- 17 Genz 2010a; 2014.
- 18 Marfoe 1995: 94–98; 1998: 153–155; Mansfeld 1970.
- 19 Frankel et al. 2001.
- 20 Braemer, Echallier and Taraqji 2004; Maqdissi and Braemer 2006.
- 21 Greenberg 2002; Bechar 2015.
- 22 Esse 1991; Finkelstein et al. 2006; Covello-Paran 2015, citing earlier surveys and recent excavations.
- 23 Wightman 1988; Tubb 1990a; Maeir 2010: fig. 57.
- 24 Greenberg and Keinan 2009.
- 25 Finkelstein 1994.
- 26 Palumbo 2001.
- 27 Chesson et al. 2005; Schaub 2009.
- 28 Gophna and Portugali 1988; Milevski et al. 2012; Yannai 2014.
- 29 Haiman 1996; Cohen 1999.
- 30 Greenberg and Eisenberg 2006.
- 31 Kochavi 1973; Seligman and Yogev 1993.
- 32 Eisenberg 2012.
- 33 Tufnell 1958.
- 34 S. Paz 2015; Y. Paz 2016.
- 35 Lapp 1966; Dever 1972; Finkelstein 1991.
- 36 E.g., Gonen 2001; Be'eri 2012; Storchan 2012; Dever 2014b.
- 37 Prag 1986; Schaub 2009; Nigro (2003b) and D'Andrea (2014) posit an extensive late EB IV settlement at Jericho, based on their reinterpretation of the results of early excavations there.
- 38 Bet Shean: Mazar 2012; Bab edh-Dhra' cult: Rast and Schaub 2003; Megiddo: Kempinski 1989 (however, see Ussishkin 2015 for a different interpretation); Hazor: Ben-Tor et al. 2017; Dan: Biran 1994.
- 39 Mazar 2006b; S. Paz 2015.
- 40 Thalmann 2010; 2016.
- 41 Thalmann 2010: 93.
- 42 Saghih 1983: 215, Plan II.
- 43 Sowada 2009: 140; Genz 2017.
- 44 Greenberg et al. 1998.
- 45 Betts 1992; Kennedy 2015a; 2016.
- 46 Richard and Long 2009; Richard et al. 2010.
- 47 Eisenberg 2012.
- 48 Rosen 2012.
- 49 Bar, Cohen and Mazar 2012.

- 50 Betts 1992; Kennedy 2015a; 2016.
- 51 Prag 1988; 1989.
- 52 Tubb 1990a; Kennedy 2015a.
- 53 Covello-Paran 2009.
- 54 Covello-Paran 2015.
- 55 Covello-Paran 2015.
- 56 Smithline 2002.
- 57 Eisenberg 1993c; 1993d; Be'eri 2012; Golani and Storchan 2014; Paz 2015.
- 58 Horwitz 1989.
- 59 Richard et al. 2010: fig. 1.2.
- 60 Richard 2000; Richard and Long 2009.
- 61 Goren 2010.
- 62 Gilead 1973; Kochavi and Cohen 1993; Cohen 1999.
- 63 Gitin 1975; Dever 2014b: 67–108.
- 64 Dever 2014b: 229.
- 65 Grossman 1994: 224–227; cf. Grossman and Safrai 1980.
- 66 Gophna and Ayalon 2004.
- 67 Bunimovitz and Greenberg 2004; 2006; Welton 2014; D'Andrea and Vacca 2015; Richard and D'Andrea 2016.
- 68 For an recent extended, yet still not exhaustive, treatment of IBA ceramics, see D'Andrea 2014.
- 69 Greenberg and Eisenberg 2006; Eisenberg 2012.
- 70 Richard and D'Andrea 2016.
- 71 Tadmor 1978; Bechar 2015; D'Andrea and Vacca 2015; Richard and D'Andrea 2016.
- 72 Falconer 1987; Greenberg 2002.
- 73 D'Andrea 2012.
- 74 Rosen 2011.
- 75 Kochavi 1967; Kenyon 1971; Aharoni 1978.
- 76 Haiman 1996; Cohen 1999; Saidel and Haiman 2014.
- 77 See nn. 74, 76; Dunseth et al. 2016; 2017.
- 78 Cohen 1999: 137–188; Dunseth et al. 2017.
- 79 Dever 1985; Cohen 1999: 200–224; Dever 2014b.
- 80 Hakker-Orion 1999: 332.
- 81 Goren 1996.
- 82 Saidel et al. 2006.
- 83 Haiman 1996; Yekutieli, Shalev and Shilstein 2005.
- 84 Adams 2000; Levy et al. 2002; Hauptmann et al. 2015.
- 85 Gelb 1986; Wilkinson et al. 2014.
- 86 McCorriston 1997; Hole 2009.
- 87 Lyonnet 2009; Schloen 2017.
- 88 Kennedy 2016.
- 89 Petrie 1931–1934; Guy 1938; Kenyon 1956; Tufnell 1958; Kenyon 1960; 1965; Oren 1973; Schaub and Rast 1989; Kennedy 2015b.

- 90 Dar 1977; Yannai 2007; Yannai 2014; Govrin 2015; Yannai 2016.
91 Wightman 1988; Tubb 1990a; Feig 1991; Covello-Paran 1996.
92 Pritchard 1963; Lapp 1966; Dever 1975; 2014b; Gonen 2001.
93 Epstein 1975; 1985; Greenberg 1992; Palumbo 2001; Sharon et al. 2017.
94 Prag 2014.
95 Kenyon 1965: 1; Greener 2006.
96 Kenyon 1965: 3.
97 Esp. Greenhut 1995; see also Horowitz 2016.
98 Shay 1983; Palumbo 1987; Greener 2006; 2012.
99 Kennedy 2015b.
100 Tubb 1990a; Tombs NE 8 and SE 14.
101 Greenberg 1992; 2000.
102 Epstein 1975; 1985; Milevski 2004; Sharon et al. 2017.
103 These attributes are commonly associated with mobile populations: Tubb 1990a; Greenberg 1992; Greener 2012; Kennedy 2015a.
104 Kenyon 1960; 1965.
105 Khalil 1983; 1984; Shalev 1988; Philip 1989; Kaufman 2013; Montanari 2014.
106 Latour 1994.
107 Guy 1938; Meyerhof 1989.
108 Porter 2002.
109 Bahat 1975.
110 Gilboa and Yannai 1992.
111 Yannai and Nagar 2014.
112 Kochavi 1973; Seligman and Yogev 1993.
113 Eisenberg 1985.
114 E.g., at Ma'abarot, Dar 1977, and at Shuni, Peilstöcker and Sklar 2005; Kaufman 2013.
115 Feig 1991.
116 Kenyon 1960: 217–219.
117 Pritchard 1963: fig. 90; Kenyon 1965: 140; Lapp 1966: 39–49; Horwitz 1987; 2014; Dever 2014b: 36.
118 Palumbo 1987.
119 Finkelstein 1991; Greenhut 1995; Gonen 2001; Dever 2014b.
120 Tadmor 1978.
121 Glueck 1960; Albright 1961.
122 Kenyon 1971.
123 Lapp 1966; Kochavi 1967; Aharoni 1978.
124 Cohen 1983.
125 Dever 1980; 1995; Richard 1980; Palumbo 1991; 2001.
126 Schwartz 2006.
127 Yadin 1971; Carre-Gates 1986; Tadmor 1986.

VILLAGES, MANORS AND INTEGRATED CITY-STATES OF THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

INTRODUCTION

The Intermediate Bronze Age Levantine world, as presented in Chapter 4, was post-urban, non-hierarchical and highly fluid and connective at the local and regional levels. It maintained limited interaction with Egypt via the northern Sinai land route and significant contact with Syria, as a peripheral actor in the textile world system. But by the beginning of the second millennium, it would have arrived at an impasse, in view of the contraction of both the Syrian and the Egyptian economies in the last two centuries of the third millennium. Four or five hundred years of village-pastoral existence (c. 2450/2400–2000/1950 BCE) suggest a society entrenched in time-tested routines. With settlement straddling the pastoral/agricultural divide and maintaining a strong presence in arid zones, population density must have been quite low by the turn of the millennium, especially in areas that had once been the urban heartland. Thus, south Levantine IBA society would not appear to have had the capacity, nor the motivation, for significant change. Yet change it did, and by the end of the nineteenth century BCE, a new Middle Bronze Age (MBA) landscape of central fortified places – surrounded by numerous villages, peppered with cult places, shrines and temples, and characterized by a vibrant material culture – had come into existence, in a dramatic reversal of previous trends. The first part of this chapter will therefore be devoted to detailed exposition of the process, often characterized as “regeneration,” which created the new, tell-centric, landscape of MB I (often termed MB IIA in twentieth-century studies).

The latter part of the Middle Bronze Age (MB II) marks the peak of independent Canaanite cultural, political and social development and the continuing transformation of the political landscape, culminating in the emergence of a prominent cluster of towns, sometimes described as a coalition or a kingdom, in southwestern Canaan.¹ The fate of these towns has been linked culturally and politically to the Fifteenth “Hyksos” Dynasty in Egypt, and its purported defeat at Sharuhén by the Ahmose, the founder of the Eighteenth

Dynasty in Egypt.² But there are serious grounds to doubt this still-common assumption.³ The MB II is often divided into two parts (MB II–III, equivalent to MB IIB–C in older usage). This division, largely an artifact of historical interpretation, is archaeologically elusive⁴ and will not be used here. The second part of the chapter therefore deals with the zenith of MBA Canaanite culture and society as well as with its inherent fault lines, which led to its collapse and absorption into the imperial Egyptian landscape of the Late Bronze Age.

Considered a historical, and often a “biblical,” period, the MBA long attracted the interest of text-oriented archaeologists. In the early twentieth century, when archaeology was merely illustrative of historic knowledge, the Levantine MBA was viewed entirely through the lens of Egyptian conquest.⁵ When archaeology evolved into an independent study of cultural sequences that could be aligned with textual sources, ceramic typologies and stratigraphic sequences were interpreted either as linked to Amorite/Byblite population movements⁶ or as responses to Egyptian involvement, which was seen, in turn, as either inhibiting local development⁷ or encouraging it.⁸ In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the accumulated results of the excavations at Tell ed-Dab’a in the eastern Nile Delta led to a marked shift of emphasis and renewed focus on the Hyksos–Canaanite axis, and on the purported Hyksos base in southwest Canaan.⁹ Meanwhile, as the defenders of the historical accuracy of biblical traditions retreated from the MBA to the Iron Age I, and thence to the Iron IIA, interpretive approaches emerged that placed a greater emphasis on material sequences and settlement patterns in the MBA, at the expense of text-based reconstructions¹⁰; even the emerging post-processual critique in archaeology was echoed in approaches that emphasized the ideology evident in its trademark rampart fortifications.¹¹ Ilan’s comprehensive review of 1995 is a landmark study, bringing archaeological data into alignment with processual theory.¹² The most recent treatments tend to revive the broader view, placing south Levantine developments within a Mediterranean, Amorite or Egyptian perspective.¹³ Material culture studies have largely been aligned with these research paradigms, serving mainly as instruments of chronological attribution or indicators of cultural influence. While acknowledging these approaches, this chapter, like those that preceded it, focuses on the Levant as a local theater of activity, in tune with broader trends, in which relations of production, consumption and exchange serve as a portal to social relations, political practice, and cultural transmission and translation.

Chronology

Much of what has been written about MBA chronology is based on historical synchronisms (mainly with Egypt) and pottery correlations,¹⁴ many of which have transpired to be extremely tenuous. Using internal criteria, however, is no less uncertain. The diffuse and often non-stratified nature of IBA settlement and

our inability to place its sites and material assemblages in chronological order result in a rather fuzzy IBA–MBA transition. The only way to identify the earliest MBA is either through the presence of pottery forms that appear to represent a very early phase of the MBA tradition or by extending a stratigraphic sequence back from a known point in time. Examples of the former are several ceramic assemblages in the Jordan Valley that exhibit ceramic techniques and forms that seem to maintain some IBA characteristics.¹⁵ Examples of the latter are stratified sites, both in the Jordan Valley and along the coast, where there are several stratigraphic phases predating the MB I–II transition whose date has been well established through external synchronisms and radiocarbon dating.¹⁶ Given the regional differences that characterize the period, it had best be kept in mind that the regional sequences reviewed in this chapter are archaeologically coeval, but not necessarily contemporaneous, in the literal sense.

Recently, radiocarbon dating has been used to great effect in closely controlled sequences that cover the MB I–II and “MB II–III” (or early–late MB II) transitions, placing the former at c. 1800 BCE and the latter at 1700 BCE (Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1).¹⁷ The beginning of the MBA is not accurately dated, but appears to fall in the mid-twentieth century BCE. A radiocarbon-based model for Middle Kingdom Egypt has also offered a fairly solid basis for the early second millennium sequence, placing the unification of Egypt under the Eleventh Dynasty at the tail end of the twenty-first century BCE, the accession of the Twelfth Dynasty a few decades later and the transition to the Thirteenth Dynasty in the second quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ The end of the MBA – placed at the conjunction of the decline of MBA towns and associated settlement networks and the sustained Egyptian New Kingdom incursions into Canaan – is generally ascribed to the reign of Ahmose, which may well be dated to the first half of the sixteenth century (see section below on “The Waning of the MBA”).¹⁹ The net result of these chronological refinements is to shorten every phase within the MBA: the preliminary phase of regeneration and consolidation – MB I – now occupies 150 years; the phase of the expansion of city-states is now only one century in duration, and the succeeding phase, which evidences somewhat contradictory patterns of expansion in the south and retrenchment in the north and hill country, is also about one century long, ending with widespread destruction and abandonment of rural areas. The entire cycle, from c. 1950 to c. 1600 BCE, is thus comparable with the first, EBA urban phase, exactly one millennium earlier, yet it is shorter and hence even more given to the rapidly fluctuating boom-and-bust cycles that characterize our region.

Climate

If the transition to a semi-sedentary lifestyle in the last centuries of the third millennium BCE has been often coupled with episodes of hyper-aridity,

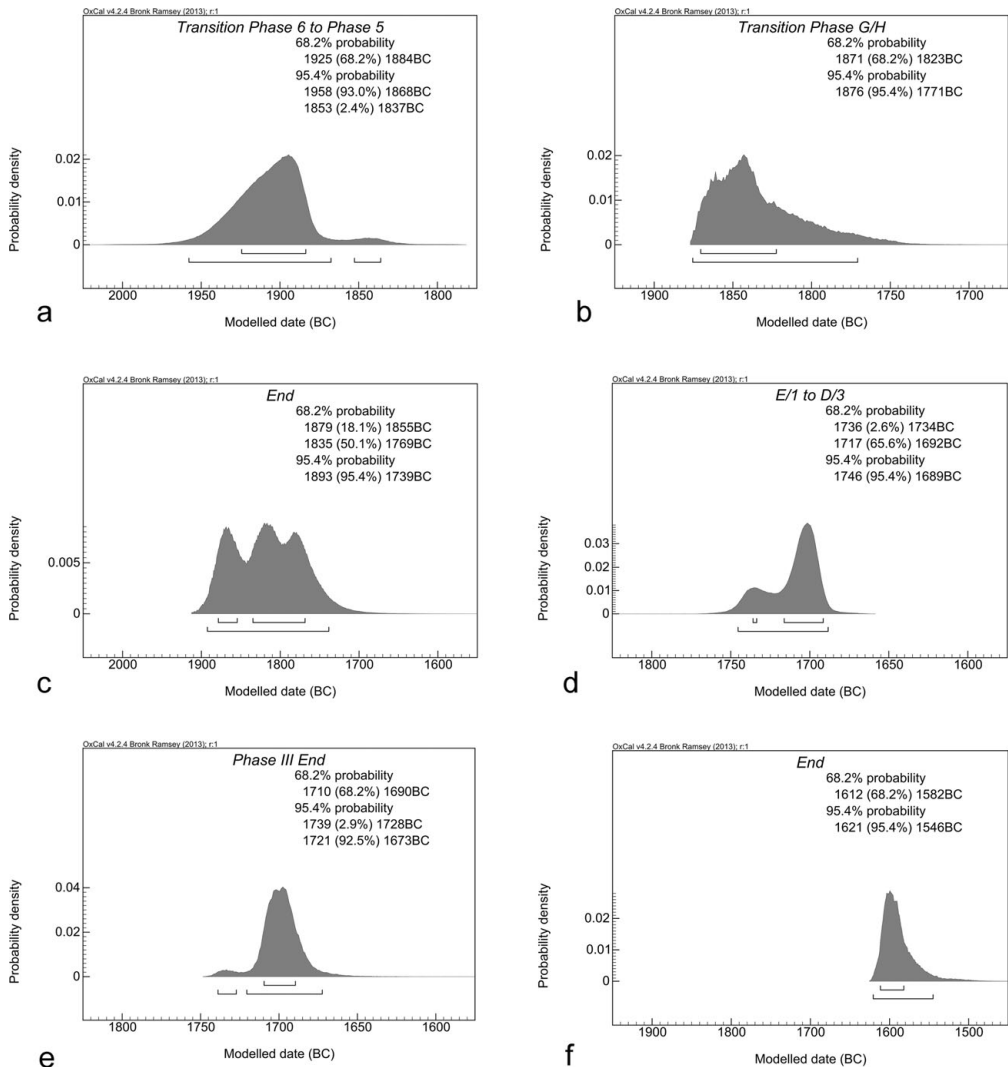


Figure 5.1 Modeled radiocarbon dates (Höflmayer 2017a) for (a) the start of the MB I at Tel Hayyat, (b, c) the transition to MB II at Tell el-Išhar and Burak, (d) the transition to late MB II at Tell ed-Dab'a and (e, f) the final MB II at Kabri and Jericho. Charts courtesy of F. Höflmayer.

general deterioration, or at least increased climatic uncertainty (see Chapter 4), there have been remarkably few attempts to link MBA regeneration to climatic amelioration. Rather, most studies appear to confirm that the decline in rainfall characterizing the late third millennium became the “new normal” for the second millennium BCE, at least until its latter part. MBA regeneration, in this scheme, would then represent an adaptation to the less favorable climatic regime, forged, perhaps, in areas and lifestyles that had been marginal during the heyday of third millennium urbanism.²⁰ A divergent view offered

Table 5.1 Comparative chronology of Levant, Egypt and Syria

BCE	Radiocarbon (see Fig. 5.1)	Mounds (contemporary strata)	Egypt	Syria
2000		Ifshar A–H Hayyat 5–3	Beginning, Twelfth Dynasty	MB I
1950	Earliest MB I dates	Afeq X19–17;		Mardikh IIIA
1900		A17–12		
1850		Megiddo XIV–XII		
1800	MB I–II transition	Megiddo XI–X		MB II
1750		Hazor XVII–XVI	Beginning, Thirteenth Dynasty	Mardikh IIIB
1700	Early/Late MB II transition	Pella Temples	Beginning, Fifteenth	
1650		2–3	Dynasty	
1600	Thera eruption		Beginning, Seventeenth Dynasty	

by Finkelstein and Langgut, based on the study of new pollen cores from Lake Kinneret, points to climatic deterioration at the end of the IBA and amelioration at about 1800 BCE, coinciding with the beginning of MB II.²¹ However, the attempt to arrive at precise correlations between climatic shifts and political events that occurred over a few decades requires multiple, converging strands of evidence, including detailed isotopic study of the grains recovered from sites dated to the relevant sites and phases.²² Given the coarse resolution of much of our archaeological data – most of the major MBA excavations occurred before it was common practice to collect systematic environmental and bioarchaeological samples – and the inherent uncertainty in pollen-core dates,²³ interpreting events during the MBA as climate-driven goes well beyond what the evidence will, at present, bear.

The end of the MBA coincides, more or less, with the eruption of the Thera volcano.²⁴ The worldwide climatic impact of this eruption is debated,²⁵ but it must have had a significant short-term effect in the Eastern Mediterranean basin and might be counted among the destabilizing factors at this time (but not, on present evidence, an overriding one).

THE CONTEXT OF MB I REGENERATION AND EXPANSION

The start of the second millennium marks an escalation in the entanglement of text and archaeology in Levantine research. From this point onward, the historical, the textual and the material are so intimately entwined in the foundational literature that any attempt to unravel them requires the construction of new conceptual scaffolding. In keeping with the stated aims of this

volume, the following chapter continues to place the archaeological evidence at the center of focus. The chronology will be based on stratigraphic sequences and radiocarbon dates, with Egyptian and Syrian synchronisms mentioned only in passing, where they are stratigraphically secure, illustrate important cultural points or indicate important political connections. The period subdivisions will be presented as significant turning points in material culture and settlement organization, in patterns of human productivity and sociability, and in the way people lived and died. That said, the regeneration of an MBA “urban” landscape in the southern Levant differs qualitatively from third millennium developments, as it is quite closely synchronized with important political and social developments in both Egypt and Syro-Mesopotamia. Moreover, it appears to have been incorporated in the political geography of Egyptians and Syrians, with the term “Canaanite” making its first appearance in the eighteenth-century Mari texts and a slew of Levantine localities and personas appearing in Egyptian Middle Kingdom incantations, biographies and royal inscriptions.²⁶ Therefore, I will begin with a brief consideration of the salient texts that have often been taken as a sign that “Canaan entered history” and attempt to calibrate expectations from them.

The three Egyptian sources most often cited in connection with the MBA Levant are the Mit Rahina inscription, the Execration Texts and the story of Sinuhe, to which we should add the recently discovered inscription of Khnumhotep III, which, although fragmentary, has literary and historical resonances with the other texts.²⁷ The four provide alternative views of the Levant from Egypt, through the eyes of scribes of the royal annals, of practitioners of state-sponsored magic rituals and of two biographers.

The Mit Rahina inscription, apparently derived from the royal annals of Amenemhet II (late twentieth/early nineteenth century BCE), appears to be the most direct and precise documentation of Middle Kingdom Egyptian activity in Asia. Taking a conservative approach to its interpretation (which is beset with various ambiguities and lacunae in the text), at least two major incursions into Asia are reported, the one possibly overland, of a punitive nature, and the other by sea, in large ships, with possible exploratory or commercial intent (although the Egyptian court would have defined its activity as the exaction of tribute). The former, presumably overland, expedition resulted in the delivery of a large number of captives (1,554 in number) and military or quasi-military materiel (such as axes, sickles and daggers, axles and six-spoked wheels) to Egypt; the latter, in the enrichment of the royal coffers with a diverse haul of goods, including metals (435 kilograms of copper, 133 kilograms of bronze, 22 kilograms of silver), raw materials for craftsmen, 275 containers of oils and resins, fruit trees and medicinal plants, and 231 trunks (or planks) of cedar wood. In his detailed examination of the maritime aspects of the Mit Rahina inscription, Marcus has noted that the materials enumerated are most consistent with an origin on the Lebanese or Syrian coast, and that

Byblos is not mentioned by name, and hence might not have been the main port of trade for Amenemhet's expedition. However, trade might not be the correct term for the activity of the expedition, which seems to have combined elements of coastal raiding, exploration and intelligence-gathering, with Byblos deliberately avoided and other possibilities being explored or exploited. The biography of Khnumhotep III, carved on the tomb façade of a high royal official of the first half of the nineteenth century BCE, a few decades after the Mit Rahina inscription, provides further insights into the degree of Egyptian influence in (north) Levantine coastal regions. It describes an Egyptian voyage, via Byblos, to obtain cedar from Ullaza in northern Lebanon, and an intervention by Senoswret III in internecine rivalries between the port cities. The ruler of Byblos is referred to as a "king" (using the semitic term *maliku*), whereas by the time of Amenemhet III and IV, in the late nineteenth century BCE, these same rulers styled themselves, in hieroglyphics, as "governors."²⁸

These two Middle Kingdom inscriptions offer important context for the body of evidence contained in the so-called Execration Texts, which served many twentieth-century scholars as a guide to the historical geography and sociopolitical evolution of the Levant.²⁹ The Middle Kingdom Execration Texts were prepared in Egypt for state-sponsored magical rituals that consisted of the breaking and burial of "red pots" and of figurines of bound captives that were often inscribed with the names and territories of enemies of the Egyptian state in Nubia, Libya, the Levant and Egypt itself. Robert Ritner, in his study of Egyptian magical practice, describes the texts as formulaic and canonical, while also suggesting that they were updated by state officials to reflect political changes.³⁰ Repeated attempts to construct a political geography of the MB I Levant, based on the matching of toponyms and ethnonyms in the texts with the results of excavations, have proved only partially successful,³¹ and it seems quite likely that the lists were cumulative; that is, they were based on information accumulated by state officials over time, through contact with captives or intelligence-gathering by royal expeditions. Moreover, this information was filtered through the medium of the execration ritual itself, which was fundamentally an act of sorcery – the exercise of magical power against the bodies of specific enemies. In such a situation, casting a wide net might be prudent, especially as it was to be expected that rival sorcerers would be engaged in counter-rituals. The lists should, therefore, hardly be read as a "Who's Who" for a particular year or reign, or as a systematic geographic inventory or itinerary.

The story of Sinuhe, whose career spanned the reigns of Amenemhet I and Senwosret I, the first kings of the Twelfth Dynasty, is a political morality tale in the guise of a biography.³² It tells the story of Sinuhe, who fled Egypt at the death of his first master, Amenemhet I, found refuge in Upper Retenu, east of Byblos, and became a great man there, prevailing in a trial of single combat before returning home and being reinstated through the benevolence of the

new king. Although it has been repeatedly mined as a source of first-hand information on the early second millennium Levant, it can be taken as little more than a generic representation of a distant land, with enough verisimilitude to pass the eye test of an educated Middle Kingdom Egyptian. As such, the mention of Byblos, of champion warfare, and of the local Amorite prince, “Amusinenshi,” might be taken as markers of what might be considered self-evident in the eyes of outside observers of the early second millennium Levant.

The four texts offer important insight into conventional Egyptian perceptions of the Levant and the nature of royally sanctioned Egyptian intervention there. In terms of state initiative and ideology, goods either produced in the Levant (wood, resins, minerals) or mediated by it (precious metals) were highly prized by the court and vital to some of its core ritual practices. In order to obtain these, however, a fundamental asymmetry had to be maintained. Rather than trading partners, Asians were viewed by the state as potentially powerful enemies or as subjects, and hence goods were either received as tribute or obtained through violence (or threat of violence), with little of substance offered in return. In this sense, Egyptian texts are not a very good place to begin to understand Canaanite society, nor do they necessarily reflect aspects of Egyptian-Levantine interaction that did not come within the purview of court officials and scribes. These – the structure of Canaanite society and the extent of entrepreneurial commerce, not to mention the myriad mutual entanglements and incidents of cultural interference and translation – need to be addressed by archaeologists. But the texts cited above provide important context, situating the regeneration of MBA settlement in the Levant within the setting of Egyptian foreign relations.³³

Amorites and Canaanites

The presumed presence of Amorite (*amurru*) rulers in the early second millennium Egyptian texts (particularly in the Execration Texts), as well as in the seventeenth-century BCE correspondence between Mari and Hazor, has given rise to a number of historical scenarios positing a cultural and political transformation of the southern and central Levant by means of Amorite migration, military conquest or political resourcefulness.³⁴ The term “Amorite” is derived from a third-millennium southern Mesopotamian term meaning “westerners” (i.e., Syrians) or “outsiders.” At the beginning of the second millennium it takes on a new meaning, indicating, broadly, people who speak a distinct West Semitic language and identify themselves with Amorite lineages. Kings bearing Amorite names are attested throughout the Syro-Mesopotamian world; however, the different Amorite-ruled polities did not all share the same social and political structures, nor were they necessarily allied. In Mesopotamia, city-states maintained their urban structure and

centralized administration and economy, whereas Syrian city-states served as palatial centers for a powerful elite that continued to rely on traditional tribal coalitions with their pastoralist kin, reproducing the political economy of third millennium Syria, but with new actors.³⁵ Moreover, fierce rivalries existed between “Amorite” polities, so much so that it has been suggested that warfare was an ideological necessity for the second millennium tribal states.³⁶ What is shared among Syrian Amorite groups is a tribal approach to kinship and polity,³⁷ maintained in urban and palatial settings: in the Amorite political model, as described by Fleming, political centers maintain strong ties to tribal groups and countryside through a web of kinship ties and mutual debts based on old pastoral structures and traditions (such as collective leadership in third millennium tradition).³⁸ This allowed the melding of new political regimes with pre-existing tribal structures across the Levant. In this manner, “being Amorite” could be more about an approach to power and kinship, shared by those who had formerly been in the periphery of the central Syrian and Euphrates Valley city-state systems. It does not necessitate migration, uniform ethnicity or genealogical (genetic) relations between the varied and dispersed groups who might have adopted ways of political action or expressions of status that scholars term “Amorite,” and limits the explanatory value of terms like “Amorite global village” or “Amorite koiné.”³⁹ At most, these terms should be taken as an indication of shared values and mutually recognized expressions of status, avoiding assumptions about shared ethnicity or tribal allegiance between distant actors.

Likewise, the term “Canaanite,” which appears first in the Mari Letters of the early eighteenth century BCE,⁴⁰ is of uncertain signification during the period in question. Judging by its later use, it appears to refer to inhabitants of the central and southern Levant, who seem to have spoken in a West Semitic dialect (or dialects), which later became the spoken and written languages of the Iron Age – Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, etc. As a matter of convenience, I will occasionally use “Canaanites” to denote the indigenous inhabitants of the Levant, in contrast to Egyptians or the inhabitants of the Amorite-ruled city-states of Syria and Mesopotamia.

MB I SETTLEMENT DISTRIBUTION AND DYNAMICS

The process of MB I “regeneration” was clearly not a uniform one, but proceeded at different rates in different regions, showing a greater or lesser degree of continuity with previous settlement. The earliest evidence for MBA transformations comes from the northern half of Jordan Valley, the Jezreel Valley and all along the Mediterranean coast. Following the initial phase comes a period of consolidation, which ends with a further push toward expansion, in the early eighteenth century, at which time (MB II) the hilly regions

and inland plains are colonized by permanent, and sometimes urban, settlers (Figure 5.2).

The Lebanese Biqua' survey counts twenty-eight sites in MB I, about half of them new, and many of the rest showing continuity with the previous period. Marfoe interpreted the pattern as evidence for "colonization" by a previously nomadic population.⁴¹ Surveys of the Jordan Valley attribute about sixty sites to MB I, on both sides of the river.⁴² In the upper and western Galilee, surveys have not always distinguished between MB I and II. Among the approximately fifty-five sites attributed to the period in general by the IAA Galilee survey, the Hula Valley survey assigned about a dozen sites to MB I – noting a marked increase in settled area toward the end of the period, when first Tel Dan, then Tel Hazor, became dominant.⁴³ The Kabri survey, in the upper western Galilee, identified twenty-eight MBA sites, assigning eighteen of them to the MB I.⁴⁴ The early MB I sites were mostly small, and were more numerous near the coast, with the early-fortified Tel Akko dominating them; in late MB I, large centers like Kabri began absorbing the smaller settlements. The Jezreel Valley was settled early and extensively: twenty-eight sites are noted by Broshi and Gophna (1986), and they include the known fortified MB I sites of Megiddo and Yoqne'am, as well as large unexcavated sites like Tel Shimron.

On the northern Mediterranean coast, where there is a considerable degree of settlement continuity (or, more accurately, rapid regeneration), Thalmann has noted a well-balanced system of about fifteen settlements focused on three small regional centers in the Akkar plain: Tell Arqa, Tell Kazel and Tell Jamous. Further south, sites and cemeteries are confined to the coastal strip, at Byblos, Beirut, Sidon and el-Burak.⁴⁵ Upward of fifty MB I sites along the central and southern parts of the south Levantine coast are noted in Broshi and Gophna's survey of the evidence,⁴⁶ and several more, such as the large cemeteries excavated at Shuni Quarry, Tel Aviv and Rishon Le-Zion or the settlements at 'Enot Shuni and Tel Qasile West, have materialized as a result of urban development in recent decades.⁴⁷ Where sustained excavations have taken place, there is evidence of a brief, initial phase of small-scale settlement scattered across the countryside, quickly followed by a settlement boom that produced a variegated landscape of villages, large walled settlements, forts, cult structures and industrial installations.

By contrast, the central and eastern highlands were sparsely settled in MB I, the main evidence for settlement coming from IBA cemeteries reused in MB I, such as 'Ain Samiya, Efrata, Kufin and el-Jib, and traces of early settlement at central sites like Tell Balata (Shechem), Jericho and Jerusalem.⁴⁸ And while the southern arid regions are virtually devoid of settlement that can be attributed with certainty to the period, the southern Syrian steppe shows a remarkable continuity and even an intensification of settlement, right from the start of the second millennium and through the end of the Middle Bronze Age. Surveys in the Hauran identified scores of small settlements situated along

seasonal streams, equipped with water-management installations (diversion dams, canals and cisterns), as well as enclosed fortified settlements.⁴⁹

The northern Sinai coastal strip produced only a handful of MBA sites at each of its extremities:⁵⁰ those on the eastern side are peripheral to southwest Canaan, while those on the western side should be seen as corollary to the burgeoning presence of Asiatics in Egypt, whether as laborers in the service of the state (e.g., in the turquoise mines of central Sinai), captives abducted in military raids, or merchants, craftspersons or other entrepreneurs attracted by the expansion of maritime commercial interactions in the Eastern Mediterranean basin.

EARLIEST MB I: CEMETERIES, VILLAGES, WORKSHOPS AND CULT PLACES IN THE JORDAN VALLEY AND ALONG THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST

Jordan Valley

As is often the case in archaeology, a good place to begin our search for insight into MBA regeneration is a cemetery: Gesher in the Jordan Valley, 12 kilometers south of Lake Kinneret, where twenty-two inhumations were excavated on a marl terrace 1 kilometer west of the river.⁵¹ As a short-lived and undisturbed site, Gesher offers a bridge between late IBA and early MB I technology and production, ideology and representations of social status. Typically, burials at Gesher comprised a single, primary interment marked by a pile of stones or a bit of stone walling that would barely have protruded above the surface. Each burial was accompanied by a small number of grave goods, varying in number and quality. In some cases, there were only one or two ceramic vessels (typically a bowl and a jar); in others, a greater number of vessels accompanied the deceased, often with associated faunal remains (primarily sheep and goat) – evidence of mortuary feasts conducted beside the graves or of food offerings for the dead. The pottery, although wheelmade, shows a certain affinity to IBA forms and is often asymmetrical and not well finished. Two burials contained perforated bone beverage strainers, which may also be ascribed to burial rites. Bronze objects accompanied eight of the burials, including nine weapons and one toggle pin. The weapons – five socketed spearheads, three duckbill axes and one socketed axe – were found accompanying seven burials: in two cases the burials had both a spearhead and an axe, while the remainder had only one or the other (see below, Figure 5.5).

Several characteristics of this cemetery place it in a pivotal position with regard to the IBA–MBA transition: like many of the IBA cemeteries that preceded it (see Chapter 4, section on “Type A, Individualizing Tombs”), the Gesher cemetery comprises mainly primary, individual burials, and like the tombs of the earlier period, the grave-offerings in themselves can be used to



Figure 5.2 Map of MB I-II sites mentioned in this chapter.

infer variations in status, with some of the deceased evidently receiving more attention than others, and some being buried with valuable accoutrements. As in the IBA, drinking paraphernalia are prominent, and like many IBA cemeteries, the Gesher burial site is not clearly associated with a settlement, suggesting the possibility that those interred in it may have come from either semi-permanent and/or diminutive villages or hamlets located nearby. About a third of the burials included one or two weapons, earning them the title of “warrior burials.” This, again, is not an innovation of the MBA, as weapons had been commonly used in IBA interments to confer some sort of status on male individuals (though the cast bronze weapons of the MBA may have carried greater prestige). The use of stone-marked pits, instead of proper shafts and caves, indicates a significant change in the budgeting of energy expenditure in burial rites. However, it is the quality of the material culture assemblage that is most indicative of a tectonic change in the conditions and relations of production. The presence of a new set of wheelmade ceramics and the complete abandonment of the previous ceramic tradition points to the wholesale adoption of an entire technological approach. Proper wheel-forming necessitated new technology – the pivot-and-disc fast wheel, which replaced the heavy, slow, socketed plate used throughout the third millennium – and new know-how, i.e., a new set of skills and motor habits. These cannot be fabricated or acquired instantly, so we must assume that they were introduced by people already equipped with the relevant knowledge and hardware, probably arriving from outside the southern Levant, answering new demands and very likely introducing a new paradigm for the interaction of producers and consumers. As for the bronze weapons, these too mark an important departure from the copper tool industry of the IBA (see Chapter 4) to a metal technology based on the movement of both know-how and quantities of tin from the north and east into the Levantine sphere. The act of burying these valuable bronzes with the dead signifies a system of values that prioritizes the symbolic power accrued through the transformation of commodities (the raw materials, traded in bulk) into inalienable objects, often sacrificed at death, that manifest the status and identity of their bearers.⁵² This value system lies at the heart of the “warrior burial” phenomenon and appears to have been widely shared by a stratum of adult males in communities dispersed across the entire Levant (see box on “Warrior Burials”). The Gesher cemetery therefore introduces several recurrent themes of MB I “regeneration”: a fusion of horizons in burial behavior, which suggests an affinity with earlier periods and a wish to maintain continuity with local ways of memorialization; an enhanced concern with emblems of status, primarily masculine ones, shared across a wide swathe of the Near East; a reinvigorated technology of craft production; and access to interregional trade in metals and other goods, tempered by an “archaic” value system that resists commodification. These themes can be traced across the Levantine landscape at sites that set the stage for the settlement boom of the late MB I.

Tombs and burials exhibiting some or all of the traits evinced at Gesher can be found along the upper Jordan Valley and westward toward the coastal plain. Reused IBA cemeteries at Tel Bet Shean and Tel Rehov, a short distance south of Gesher, each included a single “warrior” burial, whereas reused burial chambers at Hagosherim, in the northern Jordan Valley, contained bronze toggle pins and a collection of very early MB I pottery, resembling that at Gesher.⁵³ Even dolmens on the Golan plateau exhibit a similar sequence of IBA–MB I usage.⁵⁴ On the coastal plain, the early MB I burials include reused IBA cemeteries, e.g., at the Shuni Quarry site, as well as primary burials at settlement sites, with “warrior” burials appearing up and down the coast, from Tell Arqa and Sidon down to Kabri, Afeq and southward.⁵⁵ In the Jezreel Valley, there is some reuse of IBA tombs at Megiddo, but most burials on the site are subfloor inhumations in houses of the unfortified settlement on the mound.⁵⁶

An idea of the type of village community that might have been associated with these cemeteries in the early stages of MB I is provided by the small site of Tell el-Hayyat, situated on the east side of the Jordan, across the river from Tel Rehov, some distance to the south of Gesher.⁵⁷ The site itself spans the EB IV–MB II periods, although occupation may not have been continuous and the earliest (EB IV) level is represented only by sherds material. The earliest MB I phase (out of three) appears to have been a settlement of impermanent structures, clustered around a small, simple cult place built on a Syrian-style *in antis* plan (Figure 5.3). The single-roomed structure, about 6 × 6.5 meters in size, was furnished with an interior bench and corner platform and was surrounded by a walled enclosure. Its packed mud foundation would presumably have carried a wood/thatch superstructure. Notable finds from this, Phase 5, temple include a diminutive bronze plaque and an anthropomorphic bronze plaque figurine. The discovery, in a later phase, of a stone casting mold for figurines suggests that there might have been metallurgical activity associated with the cult at this village site, underlining the symbolic values associated with bronze-working at this stage of the MBA.

Very early on, while the earliest version of the temple was still in use, the enclosed *in antis* cult room was complemented by an alternate focus of ritual: a single standing stone with an offering platform at its base, placed in a small cell attached to the temple enclosure wall. The single standing stone was soon joined by a group of six more stelae placed just outside the temple entrance. The juxtaposition of the two approaches to communication with the world of spirits or deities – an enclosed space in which the divine presence can temporarily or permanently reside, and a monolith serving as a memorial or a focus of ancestral immanence⁵⁸ – represents a negotiation or dialectic that will characterize the entire second millennium BCE (and most of the first), between a hierarchical mode, characterized by formal architecture well rooted in third millennium urban life in both Syria and the southern Levant – the

temple *in antis*⁵⁹ – and a familial or tribal mode, characterized by the erection of aniconic monoliths, often in groups, with deep roots and uninterrupted use in local, south Levantine practice.

With time, permanent village houses were built around the temple enclosure. The houses appear to have formed extended-family compounds, with shared courtyards and evidence for agricultural processing of cereals and legumes (for the most part), domestic storage and household crafts. The temple itself took on a more substantial appearance as it was rebuilt in elegant stepped decorative brickwork, but this was still accompanied by respect for ancestral memorials (the temple structure maintains an asymmetry to allow the stelae to remain in place). Metallurgical activities continued and increased, the finds including obviously votive objects (zoomorphic figurines), a pair of tongs, and several javelin heads of the same type found in the Gesher tombs. The faunal remains seem to show a significant difference between consumption patterns in the sacred precinct, where sheep/goat were dominant, and those in the domestic areas, where pigs were in greater evidence. Notably, an intact potter's kiln was excavated at the edge of the village; it was filled in and later used for the burial of a young adult male. There thus seems to be a distinction between metallurgy, associated with the sacred precinct, and ceramic production, located in the domestic part of the site.

A sequence remarkably similar to that of Hayyat appears to have been excavated – but only briefly reported – at Tel Kitan, on the west side of the river, near the Gesher cemetery.⁶⁰ In the earliest phase, pits containing large quantities of charred food remains, as well as cooking, serving and storage vessels, have been interpreted as deposits related to the cult in an early, unexcavated phase of the adjacent temple enclosure. The earliest excavated temple is a square, bench-lined, pillared *in antis* structure entered from the east, almost identical in size to the Phase 5 temple at Hayyat. Facing the entrance, about 5 meters distant, was a row of monoliths, one of them schematically carved in the form of a nude female figure. Like Hayyat, the temple compound was elaborated and enlarged in subsequent MB II phases.

Another temple resembling that of Hayyat in concept and size has been discovered – but excavated only to a limited extent – at Pella. Pella, at this stage, had not yet taken on the attributes of a central fortified center, but when it did, its temple quickly expanded and outpaced that of the smaller sites, becoming one of the central institutions of the second-millennium city.⁶¹

Important evidence for independent craft production comes from a short-lived MB I occupation discovered among the ruins of the EBA city of Tel Bet Yerah.⁶² Huddled against the long-abandoned, yet still imposing, EBA fortifications, one or two rooms, several pottery kilns and associated burials attest to a ceramic workshop that operated at the site for a short span of time. The pottery kilns include a simple, stone- and clay-lined pit resembling the one excavated at Hayyat, and a more elaborate bilobate kiln in which three burials were

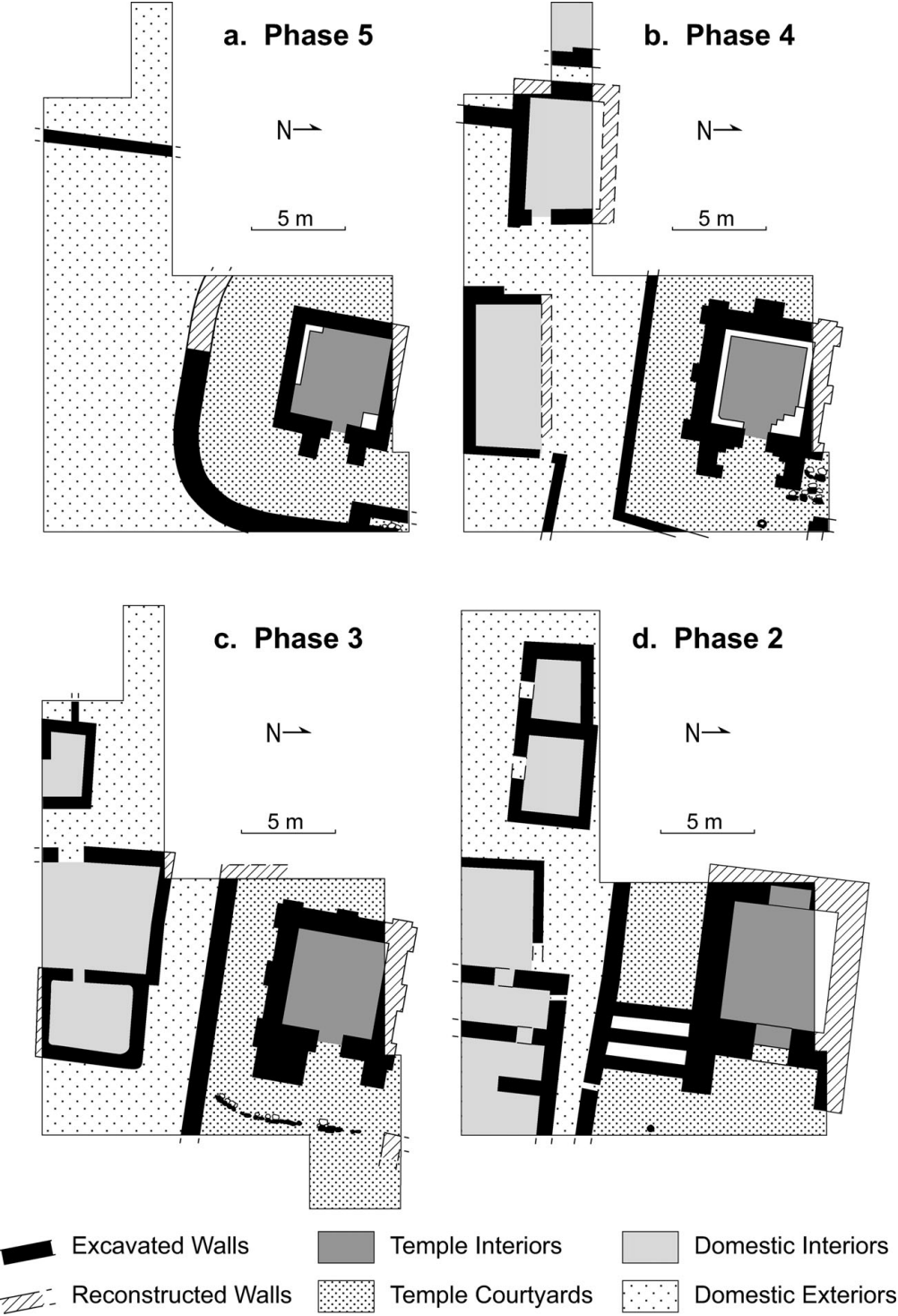


Figure 5.3 The MB I–II sequence of shrines at Tell el-Hayyat. After Falconer and Fall 2006: fig. 6.2. Courtesy of S. Falconer and P. Fall.

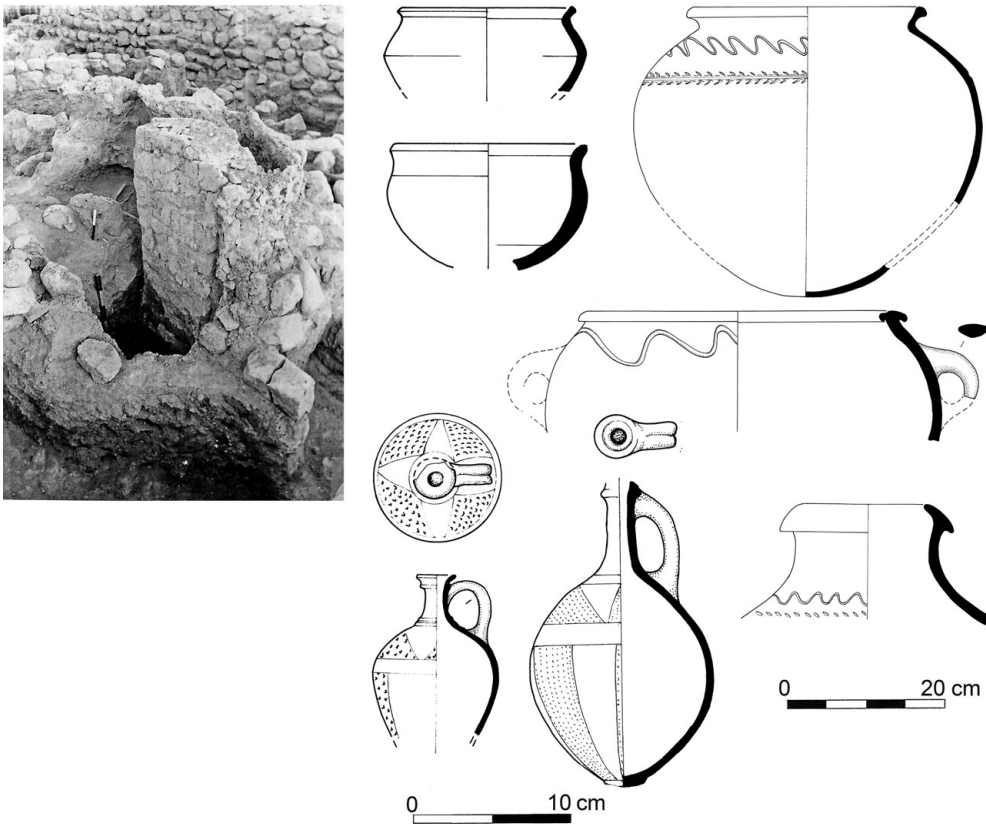


Figure 5.4 Tel Bet Yerah: an MB I potter's kiln (at left), locally produced Syrian-style pottery, and two decorated Tell el-Yahudiya juglets from graves. Courtesy of the Tel Bet Yerah Archaeological Project.

deposited after it had gone out of use (Figure 5.4). The other burials at Bet Yerah are reminiscent of the Gesher tombs – primary interments in pits that were marked with stone piles or stone walls. The rich ceramic assemblage from Tel Bet Yerah offers insight into the nature of early MBA production in the Jordan Valley. The bulk of the assemblage, from non-burial contexts, presumably reflects the material produced in the nearby kilns. It is composed mainly of open and closed bowls, kraters, many storage jars and pithoi, and some cooking vessels. The Bet Yerah potters had a penchant for globular vessels, differing from the more carinated forms found in the Gesher and Hagosherim tombs; a drab, off-white surface finish; and the occasional incised combed or scabbled decoration. As a whole, the local assemblage shows many affinities – in shape, decoration and finish – to contemporary, early MB I, north and central Syrian ceramic products.⁶³ The large number of storage vessels points to local demand based on the production and transport of agricultural staples. The vessels associated with the Bet Yerah burials, however, comprise a mixed group: while some can be assigned to the local workshop, a few red-slipped

and burnished juglets and several trefoil jugs appear to have been brought in from elsewhere. Of note are several gray-brown, burnished and stipple-decorated “Tell el-Yahudiya” juglets: a south Levantine innovation that enjoyed extended regional popularity throughout the MBA. The juglets would have been produced in a different regional workshop, like the one excavated at Afula in the Jezreel Valley, about 30 kilometers southeast of Tel Bet Yerah.⁶⁴

Tel Na‘ama in the Hula Valley opens another small window into the early MB I settlement process of the Jordan Valley.⁶⁵ Here, early MB I settlement succeeded a late IBA stratified village. As seen elsewhere, it is discontinuous, stratigraphically and technologically, with the earlier settlement, and in addition, it appears to have been encircled with a wall. Two phases of MB settlement at Tel Na‘ama are followed by a stratum of late MB I burials, apparently indicating a contraction and eventual disappearance of the walled village in the transition to MB II. Pottery at this site consisted of a mixture of the local drab and combed ware and vessels produced in the more sophisticated coastal traditions (discussed below). Faunal remains resemble those from Hayyat, with a notable presence of domesticated pig in the assemblage.

“Warrior Burials” and the Evolution of Status in the MB I–II

The mortuary expression of achieved male status through the interment of daggers, javelins and pikes with selected individuals in primary burials was relatively common in the IBA Levant. Its reappearance, with new types of weapons and accoutrements, in the MB I should not, therefore, be considered a radical departure from third millennium practice. Nonetheless, the warrior burial appears to take on added significance in the MBA, and its early floruit and later decline might signify changes in social and material values. Often associated with the earliest stages of MBA occupation, whether in agropastoral settings (e.g., Gesher and Tel Rehov in the Jordan Valley; Kh. Kufin and ‘Ain Samiya in the central hills) or in what were to become urban sites (e.g., Tell Arqa, Sidon, Tell el-‘Ajjul, Afeq and Jericho), persons accorded a “warrior” status plausibly played leadership roles in the regeneration of fortified settlement along the coast and in the Jordan Valley.

The complete set of warrior weapons and accessories, almost never appearing *in toto* in individual tombs, but showing virtually identical components in all parts of the Levant and at Tell ed-Dab‘a, included the veined or rilled bronze dagger, usually found at the waist; the socketed bronze javelin head, found near the head or feet; a bronze battle-axe of either the decorative fenestrated “duckbill” variety or the more lethal narrow notched type, typically found near the head or shoulder with its blade facing toward the deceased (that is, it is held at rest, rather than in a battle posture); a wide bronze-plated leather belt; and – most rarely – an accompanying articulated equid burial. Interments of individuals accompanied by one or more of these items are usually accredited as “warrior burials,” and while the full

complement of weapons, belt and mount can easily be imagined to have posed a menacing ensemble, the single dagger or notched axe were lethal enough on their own.⁶⁶

What is perhaps the most convincing demonstration of “warrior” regalia comes from outside the Levant, in late MB I tombs at Tell ed-Dab’a. Tomb A/II-p/14-18 L 468⁶⁷ is an Egyptian-style vaulted brick tomb set in a large pit (Figure 5.5). It contained an adult male, lying on his right side in a contracted position, wearing a bronze belt and veined dagger, holding a curved scimitar and wearing a blank amethyst scarab on his left hand. A dish with cuts of meat was placed near his head and there was an assortment of ceramic vessels, mostly Egyptian, but including an imported juglet and a locally made juglet in Levantine style. Outside the chamber, squeezed against the side of the pit, was a skeleton of a young female, presumably a servant, facing the interred male; parallel to the head of the chamber was a complete articulated donkey interment, its legs pointing outward. A somewhat earlier tomb, F/I-o/19 8, had a donkey placed at foot of chamber, facing it, and a lamb and kid offering nearby; weapons in the chamber included a belt, duckbill axe and spear, as well as Egyptian pottery.⁶⁸ Clearly, donkeys were the preferred ride of men of distinction.⁶⁹ By way of contrast, a contemporary vaulted tomb (A/II-m/16-3) containing female interments was furnished with scarabs, jewelry, a bronze mirror and numerous juglets, mostly of Levantine manufacture.

Graham Philip⁷⁰ views the interments of weapons as status markers, not necessarily associated with the occupation of their bearers; carrying a weapon, he suggests, was viewed as appropriate high-status behavior. But something greater may have been in play: Middle Bronze Age Levantine iconography clearly associates axes, spears, blades, belts and equids with rulership – whether human or divine. Several of these components can be seen on the depiction from Serabit el-Khadim of “the brother of the ruler of Retenu,” on statuettes of the Storm God, on the gold dagger from Byblos, and elsewhere. In all cases, the ruler or god is clothed in a short battle kilt.⁷¹ Moreover, weapons, belts and equid figurines are all prominent in the cultic deposits in MB I Byblos,⁷² putting them in a shared semantic field with the burial offerings as sacrificial objects. More than a mere status marker, each of the interred objects must have been perceived as a vital component in the embodiment of a complete persona or lifestyle;⁷³ thus, they were inalienable possessions, which could only be disposed of as an offering to the gods or in a tomb. Last, the figure and lifestyle of the warrior-hero must have resonated with social and political values peculiar to the early second millennium BCE, for by the late eighteenth century BCE it had largely lost its luster. Philip points out that late MB tombs celebrate the prestige of the interred through the interment of exotic trade items, jewelry, scarabs and other indicators of wealth. Meanwhile, the ethos of personal combat (notably conspicuous in the Egyptian view of the early MBA Levant, as expressed in the story of Sinuhe), gave way to more organized forms of warfare.⁷⁴ Tomb J 3 at Jericho, among the earliest in the MBA tomb series there (which begins late in MB I), exemplifies the shift in the mortuary idiom in early MB II: like earlier warrior burials, but uniquely in the Jericho MB II cemetery, this was a single burial of a young male, interred in a reused IBA tomb cave.⁷⁵ He was clothed, and equipped with a bronze belt, dagger and battle-axe of the notched type. Two additional

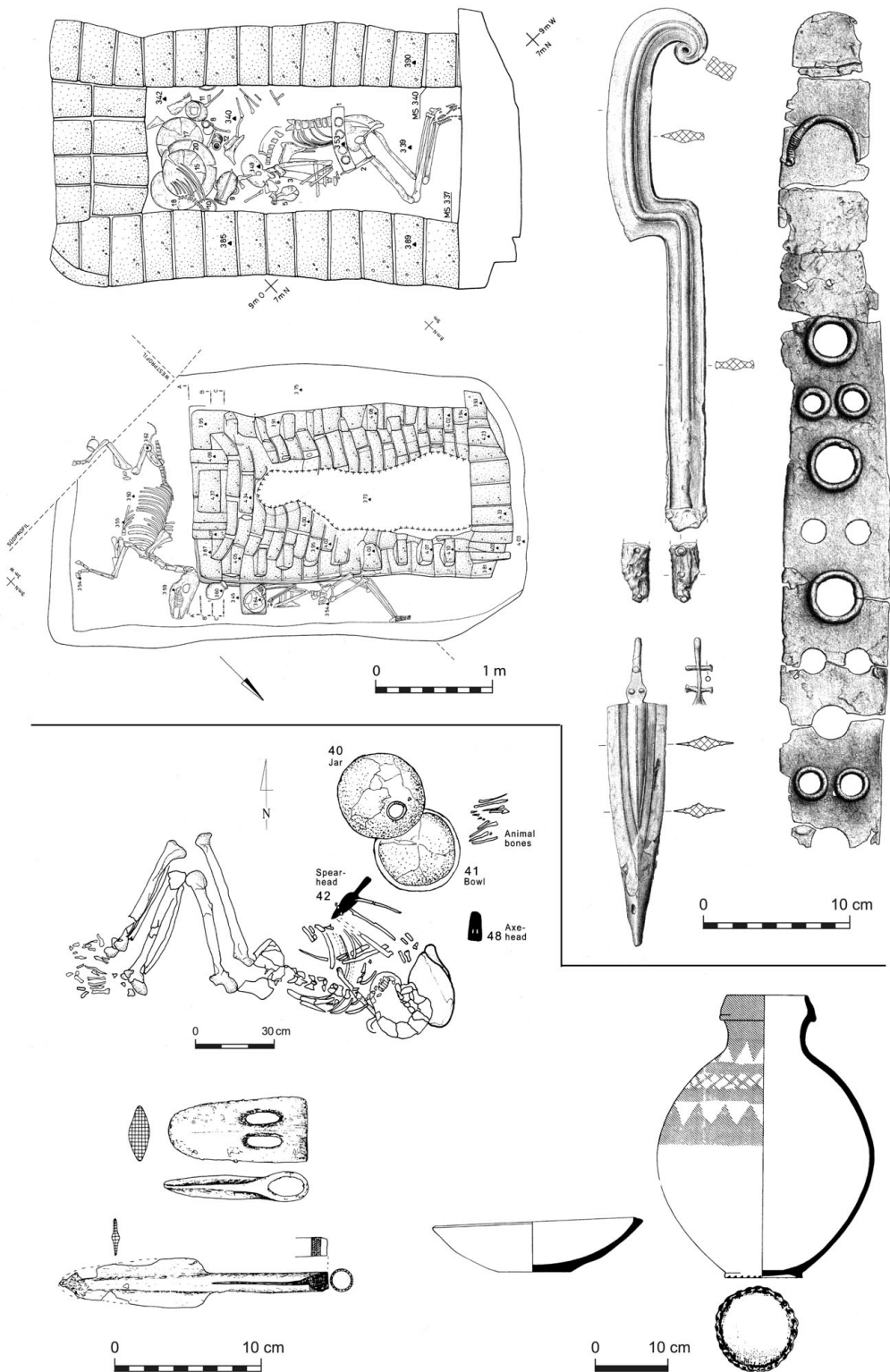


Figure 5.5 “Warrior burials”: Tomb A/II-p/14-18 L 468 at Tell ed-Dab’a, interior, with male interment and associated weapons; exterior, with female servant and donkey burial (after Forstner-Müller 2002: figs. 8, 9); below, Grave 13 at Gesher, with duckbill axe, socketed spearhead and early MB I pots (after Garfinkel and Cohen 2007: figs. 3.54, 3.56). Reproduced by permission of the Austrian Archaeological Institute and Y. Garfinkel.

daggers and axes were placed nearby. In the shaft of the tomb were the disarticulated remains of two equids. The additional offerings in the tomb, however, mark the values of the new era: they include many vessels associated with mixing and drinking, including a rare ceramic drinking set composed of a basket-handled juglet, a black, burnished strainer-cup, and brown-slipped, burnished beaker decorated with the molded and incised features of a ram's eyes, muzzle and horns. Alabaster bottles, a scarab and a cylinder seal complete the assemblage, hinting at new sources of prestige.

Mediterranean Coast

Middle Bronze Age settlement along the Levantine coastal plain shows less apparent continuity with the previous period, as compared to the Jordan Valley, and a steeper trajectory toward the creation of a stratified settlement landscape. Here, the earliest evidence for settlement comes from trading footholds established along the coast and from cultic centers, workshops and agricultural settlements associated with them.

At the start of the second millennium BCE, Byblos reclaimed its standing as the jewel in the crown of the Levantine coast, an Egyptian emporium and an important cultic center – all this, while weathering its share of political and social transformations. Following an episode of destruction that left large parts of the cultic core of the town in ashes, Byblos was partly rebuilt and refortified. Numerous finds attest to its status as the main gateway for Middle Kingdom Egyptian trade in the Levant, although the date of its restoration to “official” status is disputed,⁷⁶ and by the end of MB I, a local dynastic succession of self-styled Egyptianizing “governors” or “high officials” was installed, their presence announced by hieroglyphic inscriptions on votive obelisks and in a group of partly rock-cut, partly built tombs that contained, among other things, a rich assortment of silver and gold jewelry and cosmetic implements, local and imported ceramics, a gold-cased obsidian vase bearing the name of Amenemhet III and a gold-cased obsidian box bearing that of Amenemhet IV.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, Byblos's status as urban, in early MB I, is far from clear. While the cultic focus around the central spring was maintained, the EBA network of streets and building quarters was replaced by scattered residences. With evidence for a local metalworking industry and its own ceramic style, the fortified precinct may have served as a political, ritual and industrial center for a population that lived outside its walls, and a port of passage for political and economic entrepreneurs poised to exploit new opportunities along the coast and beyond it, in Egypt and in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The ritual center of the town had a long life in the second millennium BCE; at its core, at the cusp of the millennium, there appears to have been a small temple with projecting antae or towers, set in the middle of a large court that

eventually became dotted with numerous stelae, anchor stones and miniature Egyptian-style obelisks. The various monoliths were erected in this court and within the Obelisk Temple over a period of centuries, echoing a dual focus of cult already noted in the modest structures of the Jordan Valley, with an added maritime twist (the pierced anchor-stelae). But the earliest evidence for cultic activity comes from ritual hoards secreted in the courtyard of the Obelisk Temple, as well as the nearby Field of Offerings, the Sacred Area, and on the site of the third-millennium Baalat Gebal temple. In separate studies, Helga Seeden and Ora Negbi have pointed out chronological and functional differences between the various deposits, which may be understood as the result of periodic harvesting of votive objects left in the sacred area by traders, emissaries and travelers, and by local people as well.⁷⁸ Many hundreds of metal statuettes, most often showing a nude male deity and ranging from simple bronze cutouts to gilded cast figures, make up the bulk of the votives in the Obelisk Temple and the Field of Offerings, accompanied by collections of bronze weapons of the same types that are found in “warrior burials” throughout the Levant, with the following caveat: the most common axe type in the temple deposits is the ceremonial “eye”-type fenestrated axe of late third millennium origin, rather than the more streamlined duckbill axe, of which there are nonetheless four examples. Brody has pointed out the frequent occurrence of boat models in these deposits,⁷⁹ which he identifies as sailors’ votives.⁸⁰ In the latest MB I deposits, numerous fenestrated axes made of precious metals – silver and gold – decorated and accompanied by metal handle-sheaths, appear (Figure 5.6). They represent the highest standard of workmanship of the Eastern Mediterranean region and, like the inscribed stone and obsidian vases and ornamental objects in the late MB I “royal” tombs, they may almost certainly be attributed to artisans who, if not Egyptian themselves, absorbed Egyptian values and techniques. Notably, it is the ceremonial fenestrated axe that continues to be reproduced as a prestige artifact and as a royal and divine symbol, appearing in the eighteenth-century BCE tombs in Ebla, travelling across the Mediterranean in the form of the Vapheio axe (Greece) and Late Minoan seals (Crete), and enjoying a long life in Near Eastern and Mediterranean iconography.⁸¹ The duckbill battle-axe, by way of contrast, remained closely associated with early second-millennium males.

Wengrow views the interment of votive figurines and other objects in the ritual center of Byblos, as well as the erection of numerous stelae, anchors and obelisks there, as evidence for “a routine association . . . between the construction and use of stone monuments, the performance of collective ritual dedications, and the mounting of individual sea voyages.”⁸² These voyages would have carried not only trade goods, but in many cases people as well: a class of Levantine adventurers – traders, craftsmen and soldiers – who may have been significant agents of political and cultural colonization along the entire Eastern Mediterranean littoral.

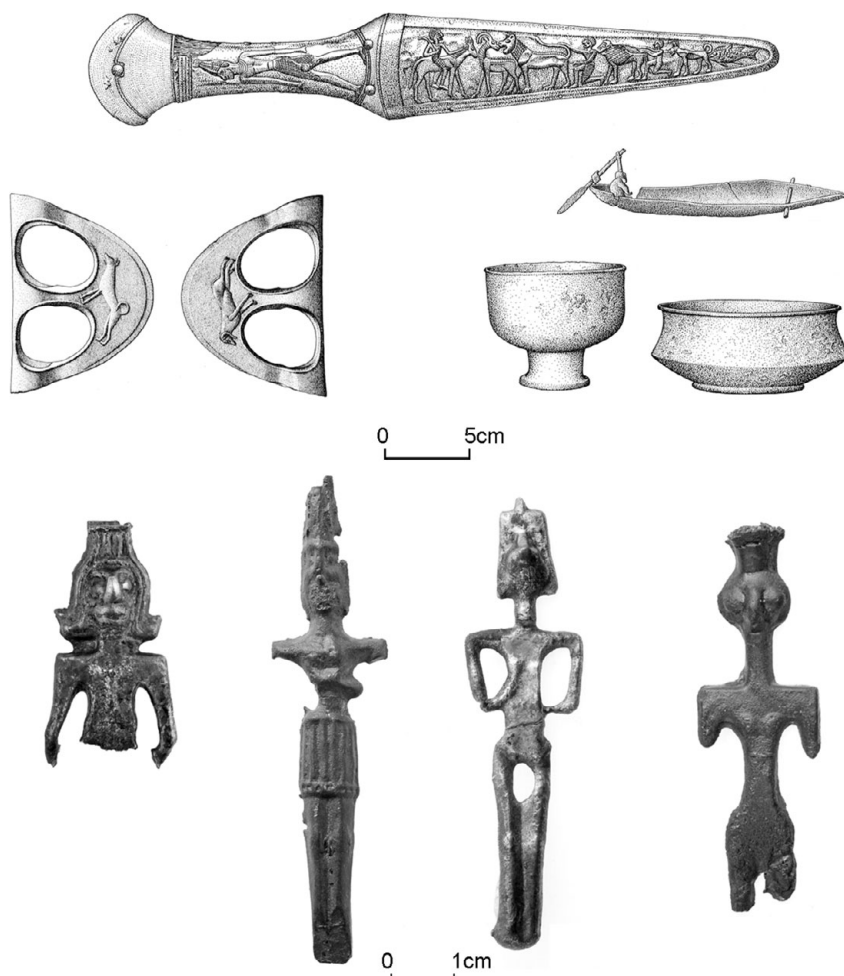


Figure 5.6 Byblos: offerings from the sacred precinct, including a decorated gold dagger and fenestrated axe, a boat model and silver goblets (after Seeden 1980: figs. 121, 125, 128, 129); below, cast bronze figurines from the Nahariya shrine. Photos by C. Amit. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Contrasting with the dominance of masculine concerns – mainly the demonstration of naked power through the medium of statues, weapons and monoliths – in or near the deposits just described, a smaller number of deposits, found only in the Baalat Temple and in the Obelisk Temple courtyard, contain objects associated with consumption of beverages, i.e., metal drinking vessels,⁸³ and with personal adornment, dress or status. Among the latter, the contents of the so-called Montet Jar, interred in the former Baalat temple, have received the most attention.⁸⁴ The jar contained hundreds of mostly diminutive objects – scarabs and seals, beads, pins, pendants, figurines, rings and bracelets – as well as a set of silver and bronze vessels. The scarabs constitute the largest group of Middle Kingdom scarabs found outside Egypt, and indeed

the collection as a whole is composed of items collected at Byblos from destinations ranging from Anatolia to Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt. It thus reflects, at one level, a vibrant West Asian and Eastern Mediterranean trade that spans the last decades of the third millennium BCE and the first century of the second.⁸⁵ Indeed, many of the same types of Middle Kingdom Egyptian scarabs found their way to Crete, and the metal vessels include carinated bowls that might be considered prototypes of the typical coastal red-slipped ceramic carinated bowl of the MB I, while the jar which contained these treasures carries a decoration best compared to the so-called Levantine Painted ware – another typical product of the MB I Levantine coast (see Figures 5.7 and 5.8).⁸⁶ At another level, it embodies the contrast between the merchant's preoccupation with the enchantment of beautiful objects and that of the colonizing *condottiere* with the trappings of military power.

The relation between production, gifting and sacrifice of weapons at the cultic site and their ultimate deposition in tombs reveals one of the principal motors of Bronze Age elite networks⁸⁷: weapons and precious metals were put in circulation primarily within an economy of personal debts and alliances formed between peers, between humans and gods, and between the living and the dead. Rather than commodities, they are indispensable agents in the reproduction of social relations; their circulation in the Levant testifies to a particular economy of masculine prestige. They form a pointed contrast with the contents of the Montet jar, which had a different trajectory of circulation, focused on the Mediterranean and the value accruing to objects that cross the mountains or the sea.

An additional coastal cult site, at Nahariya, in the northernmost part of the south Levantine coastal plain, adds another wrinkle to the devotional aspects of early MB settlement. On a low hilltop, several hundred meters away from nearest settlement at Tel Nahariya (which may well have been settled from earliest MB I), stood an open cult platform that was eventually joined, in MB II, by a small pillared hall. The earliest phases in the open cult area consist of votive deposits and remnants of food consumption, and these appear to have been the primary activities in later phases as well. The absence of monoliths is conspicuous, as is the distinct typological range of the votive objects, which only slightly overlaps with the Byblos deposits (particularly with the Montet jar) and consists of molded and cut-out female figurines in bronze and silver (Figure 5.6); ceramic votive bowls and seven-cupped vessels; ceramic figurines of cattle, sheep and especially birds; and beads and animal-shaped pendants of agate, chalcedony and amethyst. Only one spearhead is noted in the preliminary reports,⁸⁸ highlighting the (gendered?) difference in cultic focus, not only regarding the deities represented (female vs. male), but in the votive deposits, which reflect concerns associated with the human life-cycles, rather than with military prowess. As at Byblos and Tell el-Hayyat, there was evidence for on-site crafting of bronze artifacts, suggesting a close relationship between ritual and metallurgy.

Settlement evidence for early MB I comes from several sites along the coast: Tel Mevorakh and 'Enot Shuni at the foot of the Carmel range, Tell el-Ifshar to their south, and Tel Afeq at the Yarqon River headwaters at Ras el-'Ain, on the eastern edge of the central coastal strip.

Located near the mouth of the perennial Taninim River, less than 2 kilometers from the sea coast, the small mound at Tel Mevorakh commanded the south passage into the narrow defile between the Sharon plain and the Carmel ridge.⁸⁹ The earliest MBA settlement (Strata XV–XIV) consisted of a single, massive brick structure, interpreted as a fort, later joined by scattered houses. The nearby settlement at Shuni consists of a single structure with evidence for agricultural processing. The Shuni cemetery, of which only a preliminary report is available, appears to reproduce the pattern we have encountered in the east, that is, an IBA cemetery reused in early MB I. Shuni is remarkable for the presence of two fenestrated axes, one of bronze and one of silver, found in MB I contexts, as well as decorated Levantine Painted ware. These finds create a strong link with north Levantine coastal material culture.

At Tell el-Ifshar, a 4-hectare site situated on a hilltop overlooking the right bank of the Alexander River in the Sharon plain, about 4 kilometers from the sea, a poorly preserved and minimally excavated basal MB I level (Phase A), comprising several architectural phases, gives way to a spacious brick building with large rooms and courtyards.⁹⁰ Remains of cedar beams found in Phase B, which is still quite early in the eight-phase MB I sequence (the longest such sequence anywhere in the Levant), testify to the affluence of its inhabitants and to their access to trade commodities. Further evidence for both prosperity and trade connections comes from the pottery, which, while showing commonalities with the Jordan Valley assemblage, is rich in imported north Levantine types, in locally produced examples of the Levantine Painted style that typifies coastal regions, and even includes some significant Egyptian pieces (Figure 5.7). The pottery of the first two phases at the site, representing an early phase in MB I, includes, among the south Levantine types, flat-based combed and red-slipped bowls, straight-walled cooking pots with and without perforations above the ridge or applied rope decoration, deep kraters with combed decoration of a type that typifies the early MB I Jordan Valley repertoire, folded-rim jars, a combed jug and juglet, and curious, onion-shaped jars, unparalleled at other sites. Coastal types with northern affinities include a tapered-rim metallic ware jar and a group of painted jars, jugs and juglets that combine local characteristics (concentric circles, parallel bands and cross-hatched triangles) with “Syro-Cilician” motifs – lunettes, whorls and hatched rims. The site also provided rare Middle Kingdom Egyptian imports, comprising one complete bottle and fragments of several smaller and larger vessel types of both Upper and Lower Egyptian origin.

The well-excavated and published MB I sequence from Tel Afeq, on the eastern edge of the Sharon plain in the central coastal region, has served as the

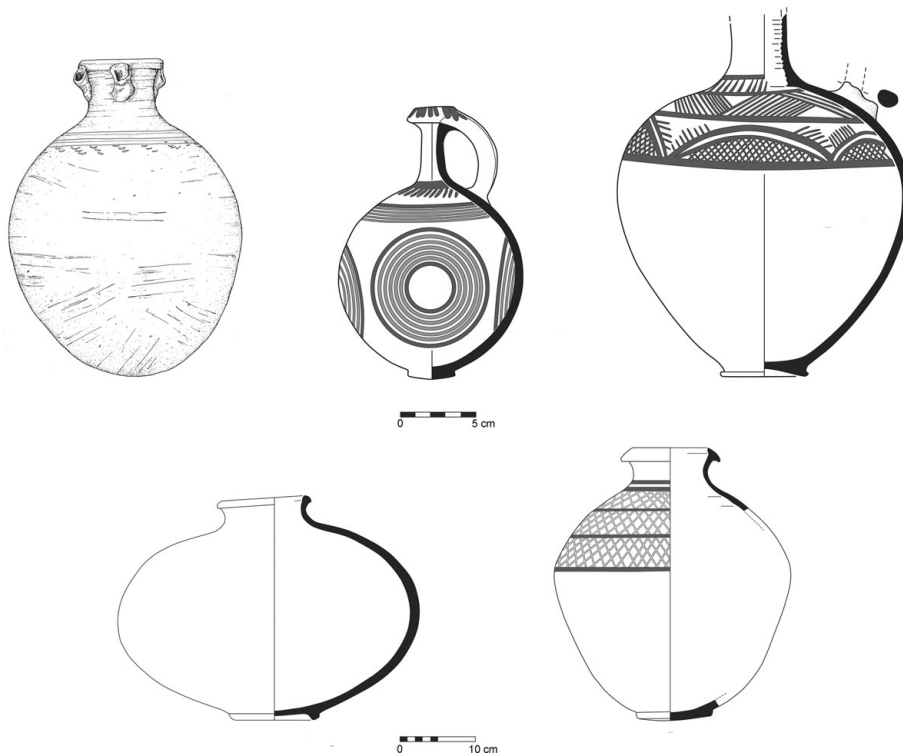


Figure 5.7 Tell el-Ifshar: imported Egyptian jar, Levantine Painted pottery and an onion-shaped jar. Courtesy of E. Marcus.

backbone for ceramic typologies and relative dating of south Levantine MB I ever since the time of its initial publication by Pirhiya Beck and Moshe Kochavi.⁹¹ Its location at the Yarkon River headwaters, some distance from the coast and equally accessible from the central hill region, puts it in a somewhat anomalous position with respect to other coastal sites. Here too, however, a very early MB I settlement, excavated in the center of the mound (Stratum XI9) consisted of scattered domestic structures.

As in the Jordan Valley, there are independent ceramic workshops all along the Levantine coast. At Tell Arqa, to the north, there is a clear stratigraphic break between the extended third millennium sequence, which runs right up to its final century, and the MB I occupation. Here, as elsewhere, the onset of the MBA is marked by burials, including a “warrior” burial, and then by a large potter’s establishment, making vessels in a local idiom influenced by coastal and inland traditions, and bearing only a general resemblance to pottery produced further to the south (the relative isolation of Lebanese coastal potters is a recurring theme, apparently influenced by the insular geography of settlement along the rocky coast). Thus, the bronze weapons in the burial include the typical dagger, spears and duckbill axes of the Levantine kit, whereas the

pottery includes carinated bowls (which should be seen as a coastal innovation, with clear affinities to metal prototypes) but no Levantine Painted ware.⁹²

Salvage excavations at the major port of Sidon, farther to the south, again revealed warrior burials; pottery from this site included painted ware of the southern Levantine variety and a several Egyptian pots, underlining the symbiosis of the new MB settlements and coastal maritime traffic.⁹³

About twenty ceramic workshops have been recorded along the southern coast,⁹⁴ of which several appear to be independent MB I establishments.⁹⁵ These may be understood as the source of the southern coast style, attested in the Afeq palaces and in numerous coastal sites (Figure 5.8).

The portrait of early MBA “regeneration” that emerges in the Jordan Valley and coastal plain may be characterized as a graft of externally inspired technologies, materials, traditions and ideologies on a thin, preexisting stratum of village/pastoral existence and tribal organization recorded in the village sites



Figure 5.8 Coastal red-slipped and polished MB I pottery. Photos by G. Vinitsky, MUSA, Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv.

and large cemeteries of the IBA. The network that promoted the movement of people, livestock and things between different parts of the Levant was certainly in existence in the IBA, but the installation of temples, potters' workshops, and a rebooted "warrior" status based on the possession of lethal bronze weapons suggests that this network was infused with new life (i.e., new agents of change) at the beginning of the second millennium (for reasons which will be discussed below). What we seem to be seeing is the southward expansion of the Syrian frontier: a form of locally entangled migration/colonization energized by changes in the resurgent Syrian heartland, insinuating itself into local structures of community and kinship. Thus, many qualities of the emergent MBA of the southern Levant bear a "family resemblance" to contemporary Syria, while differing in their details. Moreover, the innovative technologies, materials and ideologies are not essentially urbanizing. Rather, we see an emerging power structure resting on several pillars: local intensification of agricultural production and storage (marked by a proliferation of storage jars and pithoi), the installation of fixed ritual centers that meld formal deity-worship and informal ancestral commemoration, specialization of crafts indicating new standards of diacritical consumption, and the enhancement in the status of well-armed individuals, who would have been in demand to protect settlements and trade routes.

THE SECOND PHASE OF COLONIZATION: FORTIFICATIONS AND THE APPROPRIATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

Following the initial phase of settlement at previously unoccupied spots along the coast, described above, a rapid expansion of settlement occurred, marked by the establishment of large and small fortified centers all along the coast and in the inland valleys. These centers appropriate the physical and symbolic landscape through the incorporation of strategic resources and the creation of highly visible landmarks, representing a new grid of power-wielding elites, held in place through a structure of mutual obligations and debts.

MB I sites of the second phase are known largely by their fortifications and their elite structures – city walls, ramparts, and glacis, fortresses and palatial structures. A handful of industrial installations have been excavated as well, but virtually no domestic buildings or public spaces. Archaeologists often blame their own priorities for creating this imbalanced portrait of the period, but the uncomfortable truth is that only fragmentary domestic remains have emerged even at extensively excavated sites. MBA towns with a sophisticated urban layout are found only from MB II and onward; their urban neighborhoods have no clear MB I antecedents.

Despite some generic similarities shared by virtually all walled settlements in the Levant, MB I fortifications reflect new concepts of planning and execution, in no way related to third-millennium fortifications. Thus, where EB III

fortification relied on sheer masses of masonry and brickwork, MB I construction relied on sophisticated construction technology and effective exploitation of existing natural or artificial features. Where EB III walls constituted overpowering “statements in stone,” MB ramparts, gates and towers were intended to captivate their viewers on several levels, serving as indexical symbols of sophistication, prestige and the power to improve nature. There were two main modes of fortified presence in the MB I landscape: the fortress (or fortified estate) and the enclosure. Fortresses were erected at strategic points, often exhibiting a symmetrical layout with corner towers and rooms arranged around a central courtyard. These structures exploited the entire walled area. MB I enclosures were composed of massive earthworks – and occasionally a built circumvallation – that enclosed a hilltop, a previously existing mound or a predetermined, uninhabited area. These earthworks often took up a significant part of the sites’ total area, delimiting – and sometimes significantly limiting – the interior space left free for construction and looming conspicuously over it. MBA fortifications thus signaled their presence inward as much as they did outward.

Following Burke’s classification, ramparts may be divided into two major classes: freestanding and supplementary, that is, leaning against a previously built freestanding wall.⁹⁶ Among the freestanding ramparts, there are several recurring components. These include (1) the core, which may be composed of a simple earthen mound, of mudbrick compartments or of stone; (2) retaining walls that anchor parts of the rampart; (3) revetment walls anchoring its base; (4) stone and plaster mantles (*glacis*) protecting the outer face of the rampart; (5) stretches of freestanding walls that served to connect the massive gates to the earthworks; and (6) rectangular towers or bastions erected on the rampart at strategic points. Supplementary ramparts typically include components 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Where the ramparts and their plastered *glacis* created gleaming white man-made monuments and artificial mounds, sometimes in places where no mound existed before, the prestige and power of the builders was most prominently represented in the complex gate structures that graced the rampart settlements. Broad, deep and probably several stories high, the preserved four- and six-piered gate systems excavated at sites such as Ashqelon, Akko and Tel Dan testify to a developed building tradition appearing ready-made, early in the MB I. This foreknowledge, which has no local antecedents, is often adduced as evidence for the transmission of earlier, third-millennium Syrian building traditions to the southern Levant.⁹⁷

Wherever rampart fortifications have been studied in depth and repeatedly sectioned, the ramparts are found to be fundamentally opportunistic in design, utilizing natural formations or pre-existing EBA fortifications for cores and employing varying soils and bonding techniques in the laying of earth layers in different parts of the fortifications, according to the resources most readily

available. The existence (or absence) of freestanding walls on the ramparts, of which virtually no remains have been recorded, has generated much discussion and disagreement, with some suggesting that such walls were vital to the defensive purpose of the ramparts, and therefore must be assumed to have existed (their absence owed to erosion),⁹⁸ and others citing their absence as proof of a primarily non-defensive function for the rampart phenomenon.⁹⁹ This discussion keys into a broader debate over the significance of rampart construction in the MBA as a whole, in which three variables loom large: the military function of ramparts; their social cost, in terms of labor and the expenditure of social capital; and their ideological import as monuments in the landscape. Clearly, none of these roles exists independently of the other: defense is a social and ideological, as much as a military-technological, concept; social capital is grounded in the elites' ability to defend their dependents and to legitimate their own position of ascendance; while the sheer magnitude of some structures often serves as a potent index of military and social power. It is therefore taken as axiomatic, in the following discussion, that MBA ramparts served to defend those enclosed by them, to enhance the prestige of the fortified place and of its leadership, and to promote the worldviews and cosmologies of their builders. That said, the varying techniques, sophistication and sheer volume exhibited at MBA sites reflect divergent degrees of effort, know-how and extent of social control. The most detailed effort to quantify the time and labor needed for rampart construction suggests that, using *corvée* labor recruited from the sites themselves, ramparts would have been 1.5- to 5-year projects, for the most part, whereas a concentrated effort based on full-time recruitment of between 120 laborers on the smaller sites and 2,025 laborers on the largest, the construction of even the most massive ramparts in the southern Levant could be completed within a span of eight months.¹⁰⁰

Large Fortified Centers

The large excavated fortified centers of the MB I coastal plain include, from north to south, Byblos, Beirut, Akko, Tel Burga, Tel Zeror, Afeq, Yavneh-Yam and Ashqelon. Those of the Jezreel Valley are Megiddo and Yoqne'am, and those excavated in the Jordan Valley include Tel Dan and Pella, both founded rather late in the period. Afeq and Ashqelon, as the most extensively excavated and published coastal sites, anchor the discussion of fortified coastal centers.

Afeq. At Afeq,¹⁰¹ an initial village phase (Stratum XI9) is succeeded by a settlement characterized by a sturdy fortification (clearly identified and traced only along the northern and part of the eastern flank of the mound), consisting of a solid brick wall fronted by an earthen supplementary rampart, and a large, well-built structure dominating its acropolis, termed "Palace I" (Figure 5.9). The size of Palace I, with its thick brick walls and plaster floors, remains

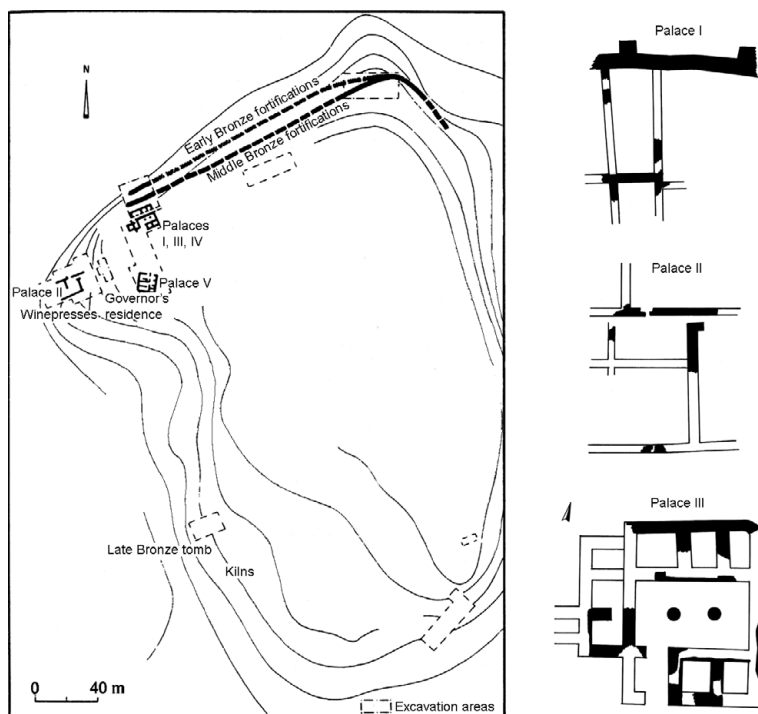


Figure 5.9 Plan of Afek and its manor houses. After Herzog 1997: fig. 4.6 (by permission).

uncertain, and it was stripped of its contents when it was abandoned. According to the excavators, a coeval occupation, in Area A on the west side of the mound, consisted of scattered walls, in several phases, a fire installation, pits, and a number of primary interments of all ages and genders. If this sequence is correct, the fortifications of Afek would have enclosed a settlement consisting of a large, central manor house surrounded by a few huts and open areas used for refuse disposal and for burials.

In the following phase, still in MB I, a new “palace” (Palace II) was built at the western edge of the site, where we might have expected to see a fortification, while the earlier mansion was abandoned, scavenged for building materials, but not resettled or rebuilt. Like Palace I, Palace II was only partly excavated, revealing a few large courtyards with thick plaster floors and a few simple subfloor burials. The only concentration of finds attributable to Palace II comes from a pit in which vessels were cached, perhaps when the building was abandoned. Several built tombs, excavated in 1936 and situated northwest of the acropolis, have been attributed to this phase.¹⁰² These tombs contained some fine examples of Levantine Painted ware and a number of bronze weapons. A third reversal of fortunes occurred at the end of MB I or early MB II, when “Palace III,” a massive 600-square-meter building consisting of rooms arranged on three sides of a central court, was constructed on the site of

Palace I. At this time, Palace II lay abandoned, its ruins partly used as squats and partly serving as a cemetery for infants and children.

The pottery sequence at Afeq, which differs to some extent from that of the Jordan Valley, may be taken as representative of the south Levantine coast. In the earliest, “pre-palace” phases the coastal pottery is drab and unslipped; light pattern or wheel-combing appears on small bowls, jugs and jars. Later in MB I, in phases associated with the mansions, Palaces I and II, burnished red slip becomes dominant in the coastal industries, but toward the end of the period slips begin to decline, becoming rare in the following period. Plain, flat-based open bowls of the first phase give way to slipped and radially burnished bowls with elaborated rims – occasionally knobbed – and disc (later, ring) bases. Closed rounded or lightly carinated bowls become more angular in mid-MB I, approximating metallic forms. Cooking pots fall into two major types – wheelmade ovoid or deep pots with thickened rims, and straight-walled casseroles with perforations between the rim and the applied ridge beneath it. Handleless jars are a hallmark of the period, with the earlier forms – some of them painted – showing slightly convex flattened bases, and the later, unpainted, with pointed base. They appear alongside two-handled jars with folded or concave rims and late handleless pithoi. Early Levantine Painted ware jugs and juglets and red-slipped jugs, some with shoulder handles, give way to carinated shoulder-handle jugs, red-slipped piriform and cylindrical juglets and long-necked red-slipped jugs with cut-away rims.¹⁰³

The sequence of construction and abandonment episodes at Afeq can be interpreted in the following manner: a small village located near the most important springs of the entire coastal plain came under the control of a leading family – perhaps one of two rival factions – that initiated two construction projects: a mansion located on the hilltop and a fortification to enclose it, together with an area used for multiple functions – domestic, industrial and perhaps horticultural. Presumably, labor-power for construction would have been recruited from the rural and pastoralist inhabitants of the pre-existing village and the nearby countryside,¹⁰⁴ some of whom then became dependents and retainers of the leading household. The construction of the second mansion, Palace II, can be understood to mark the ascendance of a competing faction within the site (the former dependents?), at the expense of the first family (the fact that Palace I was cleared out, but not reoccupied, suggests the recognition by the new overlords of previous rights in property, indicating that they were not outsiders). Palace III represents a return to the original order. There is room for doubt whether Afeq ever achieved urban status in the MBA. Rather, a feudal-like social structure appears to be in place, with the “palaces” in fact serving as manors of large agricultural estates, surrounded by far smaller residences of dependents and retainers. Several potter’s kilns excavated on the southwest flank of the mound and attributed in preliminary

reports to MB II could well mark the location of workshops attached to the successive manorial estates.

MB I Afeq thus embodies several fundamental properties of coastal settlement: resettlement of a long-abandoned and strategically located site, its appropriation by an entrepreneurial household or households led or accompanied by one or more warrior-status individuals, the construction of a central manor house and of fortifications that accentuate the site and raise it above its surroundings, and the inclusion of storage, craft and burial functions within the settlement, enhancing its autonomous, multifunctional, self-contained status.

Ashqelon. The recent publications of the Ashqelon expedition as well as Burke's recapitulation of its main MBA finds establish the great semicircular enclosure, now capped by tenth- to eleventh-century CE Fatimid fortifications, as a dominant polity on the southwest Levantine coast.¹⁰⁵ At 60 hectares, it would be by far the largest site of the south Levantine MB I and has been interpreted as the populous center of a kingdom, with up to 15,000 inhabitants and with several large, medium and small-sized settlements in its orbit. Although located on the shore, with one side open to the sea, Ashqelon has no harbor. However, multiple artesian wells still visible within the enclosure (all of them apparently post-Roman in date) testify to Ashqelon's peculiar advantage: its subterranean water source.¹⁰⁶ Ashqelon sits atop a shallow subterranean drainage system that conducts groundwater from the east, preventing the seepage of sea water from the west and allowing fresh water to be reached just below the surface. This must have been its principal attraction for settlement and for its use as a port of trade on the Mediterranean coast, as it affords little natural protection for seagoing craft.

Excavations of MBA remains (Figure 5.10) have centered on a small stretch of fortifications abutting the north slope of a mound that dominates the northwest angle of the site (the North Tell). Here, an imposing earthen rampart faced with stone and plaster glacis has been revealed, built in several incremental stages, each associated with one of the main stages of a striking series of massive, superimposed gates built in combinations of dressed kurkar sandstone and mud bricks. The earliest of the three gates attributed to MB I established the basic plan, maintained through the first three phases of its existence: an elongated four-pier (two-doorway) plan, with a long, vaulted east-west passage leading to a rectangular court at the rear. Access to the gate was direct, from the east, bypassing a deep dry moat created by the quarrying of materials for the rampart and glacis. This moat was filled during the next phase of the gate, when it was furnished with a forecourt bounded by revetment walls that supported the later glacis constructions, and approached by a roadway that ran along the revetment wall before making an abrupt right turn to the gate. Finds in the fill of the moat include Egyptian water-jar fragments and clay, scarab-impressed seals attributed to the early Thirteenth Dynasty, a Middle Minoan IIB Kamares ware cup, Cypriot White Painted

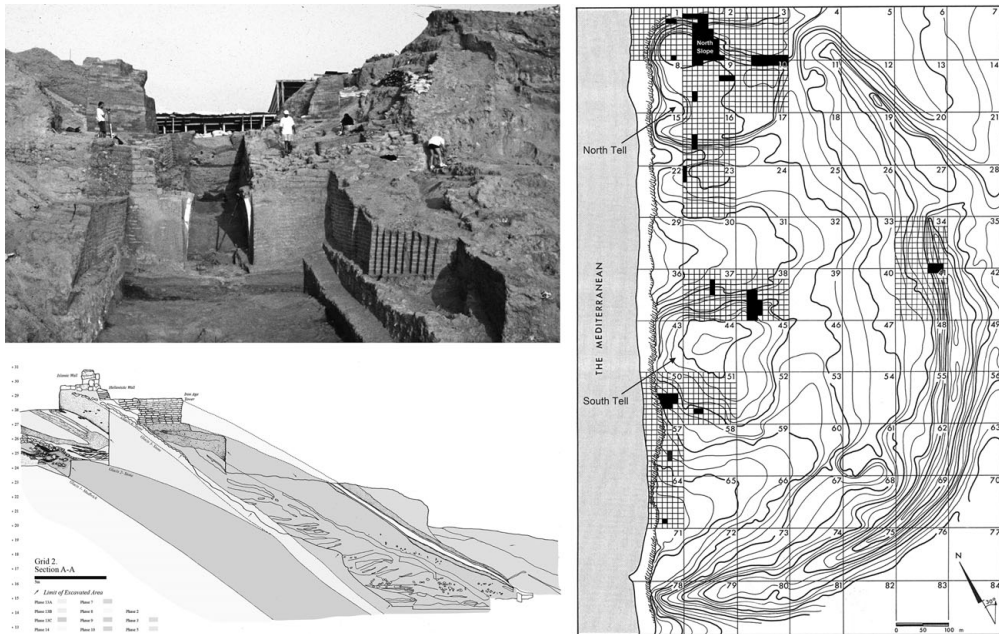


Figure 5.10 Ashqelon: the MB I gate, a section through the rampart, and the topography of the ancient site. Courtesy of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashqelon.

Cross Line style jug fragments, north Levantine ridge-necked pithos rims, and a local assemblage that included red-slipped open and closed bowls in the later Afeq style, wheelmade cooking pots with gutter rims and handmade perforated casseroles, storage jars with “red, white and blue” painted decoration that occurs elsewhere in southern plain, and a lustrous form of Tell el-Yahudiya ware with linear incised decoration that was locally produced and exported to Tell ed-Dab’a.¹⁰⁷ The remains of this stage of the gate itself are extraordinarily well preserved, nearly to the top of the pointed mudbrick archway, having been quickly filled in, despite undergoing two phases of repairs and alterations. The third stage of the gate, built in late MB I at a much higher level than the earlier phases, involved a major rebuild and widening of the gate and the construction of a bent axis approach protected by an outer gate. A fourth stage, attributed to the MB II, is marked by a much-reduced gate structure and the addition of an external shrine and adjacent built tombs that partly blocked access to the gate passage. The extraordinary preservation of the Ashqelon gate complex permits us to experience the sensorial impact that it might have had in antiquity. For visitors heading eastward, up the ramp, from the sea shore, the glare of the sun on the white sand dunes to their left and on the steep, stepped whitewashed glacis to their right would have created an instant and unnerving contrast with the gloom of the long, sloped vaulted corridor, and by the time they became accustomed to the gloom, they would have been thrust out again into sunlight, in the internal gate plaza. This manipulation of the senses was a

crucial opening gambit, advertising the power of the city and of its rulers and the insignificance of the visitor, and it was to be reproduced in the other great MBA institution – the Tower Temple.

The gate at Ashqelon is built in a section of the rampart that veers southward from the northern arc of the semicircular enclosure, following the contour of the natural hill that lies at the base of the “north tell.” Additional soundings excavated along the western flank of the rampart suggest that parts of it were more simply constructed than the gate area, and that it may have followed the contours of natural ridges that demarcated the site.¹⁰⁸ Excavations within the enclosure revealed some stratified remains on the south tell (the natural hill in the center of the enclosure), as well as MB I–II tombs and burials without associated structures. Detailed studies of the scarp of the mound facing the sea suggest an uneven topography and checkered settlement sequence.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, as far as can be made out from the preliminary reports, MB I Ashqelon is a huge enclosure that captured within it an area of multiple functions.

Thus, the actual excavated and surveyed remains, insofar as they have been published to date, suggest that reports of Ashqelon’s urban status and territorial control may have been somewhat exaggerated. The quick succession of gates built during MB I indicates maintenance issues of the mudbrick superstructure that could be attributed to an inadequate labor pool. The finds in the moat are indicative of small-scale trade in the Mediterranean and the possible presence of an Egyptian trading-post, which should be seen in light of, but independently from, large-scale royal ventures like those mentioned in the Mit Rahina inscription. MB II developments in the gate area indicate reduced circumstances within the town and a lower volume of contact with the outside world: the gate is reduced in size, and a large building containing a small shrine and several tombs are built right across the approach ramp.

Ashqelon therefore brings to mind large, possibly “hollow,” enclosures of both third and second millennium Syria – a point underscored by the comparisons drawn by the excavators and by Burke between the enclosure at Ashqelon and the “Kranzhügel” sites of third millennium Syria, which had built-up cores, but more sparsely occupied perimeters.¹¹⁰ The concept of “hollow cities” has recently been put forward in a discussion of Syrian MB I “urban regeneration,” as viewed from the Qatna.¹¹¹ Here, a large mound already settled in EB IV, but abandoned briefly before the onset of the MBA, served as the acropolis for a new, 1-square-kilometer, enclosure. On the MB I acropolis a central major building (temple? palace?) was constructed, with adjacent installations testifying to large-scale pottery production. Nearby there was an open sacred area with offerings and a necropolis was established on the acropolis slope. At the beginning of MB II, a new palace was built on the acropolis, as well as new houses, streets, and possibly an inner fortification wall. The later phase of the MB II saw the establishment of the new great palace of Qatna, but even at this time, much of the lower town remained uninhabited,

with parts of it serving as a water reservoir and others possibly for corralling livestock and for intramural garden plots (a function that has also been suggested for the lower city at Mari and other large Syrian sites of the third and second millennia). Morandi Bonacossi proposes that

in Middle Bronze Age Syria a new “idea” had developed of the city, which dominated the countryside as a sort of “disembedded” capital essentially devoid of common residents, who mainly lived in rural villages and towns that surrounded the urban centres and [the] enormous, enclosed fortified areas. These huge enclosures were used also for the protection of the rural inhabitants of the countryside, as a group of letters of the governor of Karana, Hasidanum, to Iasmakh-Addu suggests. These walled cities thus considerably exceeded the needs of the individual centres.¹¹²

Additional sites that can be characterized as multifunctional enclosures are the seaside rampart site of Yavneh-Yam, about 32 kilometers north of Ashqelon, and the inland site of Tel Burga, just south of the Carmel range. Neither site has been extensively excavated, but both were furnished with massive ramparts and both enclosed a large, sparsely settled area. At Tel Burga, ceramics from occupation layers indicate occupation in the IBA and early to mid-MB I, whereas the finds from a recently excavated built tomb are mid- to late MB I.¹¹³ This is one of the earliest examples of collective on-site burial – a practice that becomes common across the Levant in the early second millennium (see section below on “Mortuary Landscapes”). A depression in the northeastern part of the site might indicate a water reservoir or pond incorporated in the 25-hectare enclosed area. Yavneh-Yam resembles Ashqelon, as it demarcates an area (28 hectares) fortified on three sides and open to the sea. A six-piered gate belongs to the earliest phase, which is either late MB I or early MB II.¹¹⁴

Nearly as large as these was the MB I settlement at Tel Akko, on the north shore of the Haifa Bay, where remains of a massive late MB I rampart, preceded by a more modest mid-MB I fortification, were sectioned. A late MB I gate resembling that of Ashqelon was built on the west side of the mound, on the side nearest the sea, but little can be said about the interior of the site.¹¹⁵

Moving to the Jordan Valley, the “urban” transformation – that is, the emergence of large fortified centers – was markedly slower and less dramatic than on the coast. Only toward the end of MB I, that is, in the latter part of the nineteenth century BCE, do we witness, first, the construction of the fortress at Qiryat Shemona (described below in the section on “Small Fortified Sites”) and then the massive fortifications at Tel Dan in the north and first occupation at Pella to the south.

The 20-hectare site of Tel Dan, massively fortified in EB III and virtually abandoned in the IBA, was reoccupied in early MB I. Buried under the massive MB I–II ramparts, the earliest MB phases have been only sparsely



Figure 5.11 Tel Dan: aerial view of the rampart city prior to the excavations (left), and the arched mudbrick city gate during excavation (right). Courtesy Tel Dan Excavations, Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem.

excavated, but they appear to consist of scattered structures and mortuary remains, including a slab-lined tomb, built around the edges of and inside the krater created by the enormous EB III fortifications.¹¹⁶ Late in the MB I, the EBA system was replaced by an earthen rampart that used the earlier fortifications as its core (except for the southern flank of the mound, where a new stone core was constructed). The rampart increased – and in some places doubled – the cumulative height of the town perimeter, creating the crater-like aspect that the site retains to this day, and enclosed a large spring that later became the focal point of the local cult (Figure 5.11). The rampart was pierced by gates, of which one was excavated: a mudbrick triple-arched gateway, approached from both inside and out by broad stairways and topped by massive towers.¹¹⁷ This gate appears to have been buried not long after its construction and reincorporated in the rampart, probably due to structural weakness. Aside from the ramparts, the gate and a few tombs, very little is known about the nature of the settlement at late MB I Tel Dan, though the planning and effort invested in construction testify to the presence of a powerful authority and a well-established building tradition.

Pella was first occupied and fortified in late MB I. A sounding excavated at the southeast corner of the mound indicates the construction of a freestanding mudbrick fortification wall, which was soon abutted by domestic structures at the transition to MB II.¹¹⁸

Bridging the major settlement zones of the northern Jordan Valley and Mediterranean coast, the Jezreel Valley shows limited early MB I occupation, then the growth of several urbanizing sites in later MB I. The most important of these are the two strategic hilltop sites of Megiddo and Yoqneam, which seem to exhibit a similar sequence of settlement (excavated to a far greater extent at Megiddo, but more securely stratified at Yoqneam). Both sites have early MB I tombs, predating the fortifications, and late MB I fortifications

consisting of 2- to 3-meter-wide city walls and external glacis.¹¹⁹ Also, both sites appear to have had a ring of houses built against the town wall, representing the initial steps toward an urban layout. The sacred precinct of Megiddo has an uncertain MB I history, but it does seem likely that it included a small cult room and an open cult place furnished with standing stones in the indigenous style. Bronze female figurines resembling those of Nahariya are probably to be assigned to this stage.

Tell Beit Mirsim represents the southernmost MB I fortified site, established at the interface between the inner coastal plain and the south-central hills. Beit Mirsim Stratum G was unfortified, but included several well-built structures, including a spacious 80-square-meter structure with a large hall supported by three pillars.¹²⁰ In Stratum F, the site was surrounded by a massive stone wall with integrated towers, against which a row of houses was built. Although there are many uncertainties regarding the stratigraphy of the site and the sequence of its fortifications, it holds pride of place as the source of the first secure typological sequence for MB I–II, established by W.F. Albright.

Small Fortified Sites

The middle and later part of MB I is marked by the construction, in areas already colonized earlier in the period and occupied by large fortified centers, of small fortified sites. Assaf Yasur-Landau has argued that the well-built, 2,000-square-meter fortress of Qiryat Shemona, located near the junction of two important transport routes from the Lebanese Bika' and from the northern Golan and northeastern Hula Valley, was a product of an early attempt at territorial control on the part of pre-urban elites, possibly residing at Tel Dan/Laish or Tell Abil al-Qamh (Abel Bet Ma'acah).¹²¹ Alternatively, the large enclosure with massive corner towers, which does not appear to have been limited to military functions, might be understood as an early attempt to establish an economic base by political entrepreneurs and the warrior elite of the mid- to late MB I. It was soon overshadowed, however, by the rapid growth of Tel Dan.

Sometime in the mid-MB I, a large, fortified palace or mansion, quite similar in concept to the contemporary fortified structure at Qiryat Shemona, was erected on the hill of el-Burak, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea about 9 kilometers south of Sidon (Figure 5.12). Pottery found there is south Levantine in style, but the structure is particularly remarkable for a set of murals painted on white plaster in one of its rooms. The paintings, Egyptian in style and unique in the MB I Levant, show a hunting scene, a procession and fragmentary landscapes (Figure 5.13).¹²²

Moving down the coast, the small brick fortress at Tel Mevorakh was supplanted, late in MB I, by a new fort defined by a massive tamped-earth rampart that redefined the contours of the hill upon which it was built.

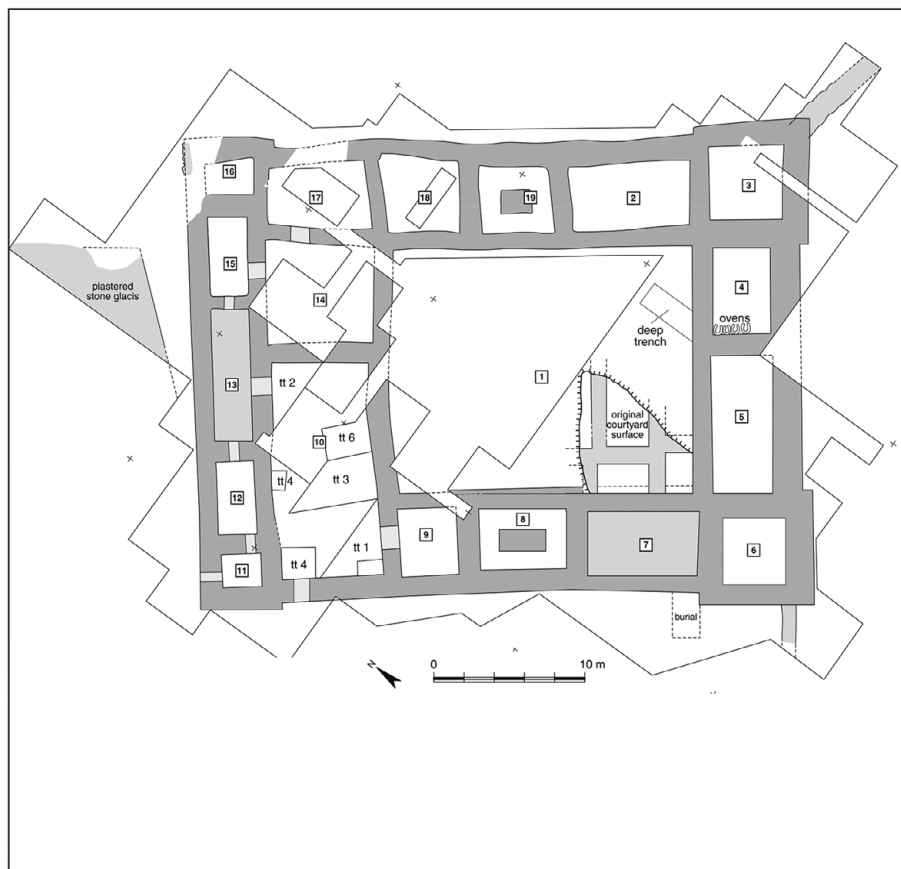


Figure 5.12 Plan of the fortified estate at Tell el-Burak. Courtesy of Jens Kamlah.

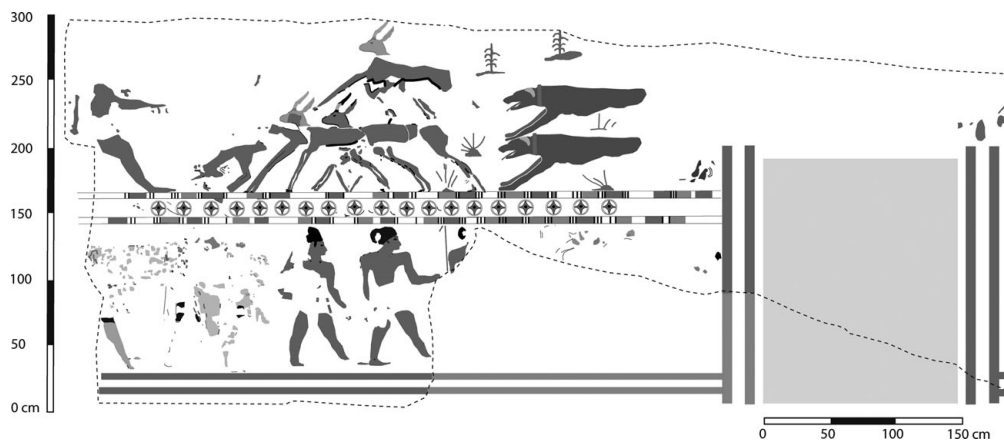


Figure 5.13 Wall paintings at Tell el-Burak. Drawing by Agnes Henning, Tell el-Burak Project; mapping by Daniela Arnold, Janka Verhey; DAI. Courtesy of Jens Kamlah.

Excavations in the krater (less than 1,000 square meters in extent) created by the inner retaining wall of the rampart revealed several rooms belonging to a residential unit that remained in use well into the MB II.

Two sites south of the Carmel coast are 'Ain Zurekiya and Tel Poleg, both situated on the small perennial stream of Nahal Poleg (Wadi al-Falik). The earlier of the two is 'Ain Zurekiya, 0.4 hectare in size, which lies about 5 kilometers from the coast. Two domestic phases (a pillared house?) associated with a 3.2-meter-wide defense wall were identified, both dating to the MB I.¹²³ The 1.2-hectare site of Tel Poleg, badly damaged by quarrying, is about 1.2 kilometers from the coast. All that has survived is a massive fortification wall, glacis and tower of the mid-MB I.

At Tel Qashish,¹²⁴ on the northern bank of the Qishon River, at the western extremity of the Jezreel Valley, a small (approximately 1.2-hectare) fortified settlement was constructed at the end of MB I (Stratum X) and continued in use to the end of MB II (Strata IXa–c). From the start, the site had the appearance of a planned settlement, with a 1.7-meter-wide wall (to which a modest rampart was attached), a large tower and two rows of rooms along the wall bordered by a paved street. Loom weights found in the houses, as well as intramural infant jar burials and the articulated burial of an adult female, are clear evidence for a domestic (rather than military) occupancy. The latest phase of the house structures is marked by the presence of many storage pithoi. In all, the scope and sophistication of the construction and the storage capacity suggest resources greater than what may be expected from a small village of this size, so it seems likely that it served as an outpost of the nearby town of Yoqneam. The fortified village was temporarily abandoned at the end of MB II, before being reoccupied briefly in a small way (Stratum VIII) on the cusp of the Late Bronze Age.

SEA TRADE IN MB I

There is tenuous, yet persistent, evidence for the existence of maritime trade along the Levantine coast during the MB I. It is, in fact, the first period in history during which the south Levant may be said to have entered the realm of maritime interactions, since earlier maritime contacts were limited to the “Byblos run” of Old Kingdom times and barely touched other parts of the coast. With the prevalent sea currents favoring movement from south to north during most of the year, and the prevailing northwestern winds allowing north to south sailing in the summer months, the Egyptian–Levantine connection was prominent from an early stage. Later, increasing numbers of Cypriot imports testify to a growing maritime trade network at the transition to MB II.

Egyptian artifacts on the Levantine coast include upward of forty scarab-impressed seals – apparently made of local clay – from Ashqelon, possibly attesting to the existence of an Egyptian trading-post there (Figure 5.14), a



Figure 5.14 An Egyptian clay seal from Ashqelon. Courtesy of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon.

loom weight from the small port of Tel Nami bearing the imprint of a scarab of Amenemhet III, a number of Egyptian water-jar fragments from Ashqelon and Sidon and a few smaller Egyptian vessels from Tel Ifshar and Sidon.¹²⁵ As noted earlier, the Byblos connection began with diminutive items – mainly scarabs and pendants – collected in the Montet Jar in the earlier part of MB I, with the reestablishment of Byblos as a virtual Egyptian outpost in late MB I marked by the presence of precious gifts from the Egyptian court. In all, the quantity and nature of Egyptian items in the Levant points to limited exchange, initially related to the occasional provisioning of Egyptian boats as they sailed up and down the coast and perhaps only later developing into an exchange of prestige objects between local rulers and the Egyptian kings or their representatives. A handful of Cretan Kamares ware sherds found in the MB I Levant as well as seeds of an Aegean legume (*Lathyrus climenum*) from Tel Nami¹²⁶ should probably be viewed as having arrived via Egypt, since direct connections with Crete are unlikely at this time: west–east movement of goods would have been mediated by Egypt, whereas east–west movement would have been mediated by Byblos, Cyprus and intervening points along the northern route.

Southward movement along the Levantine coast is attested to by objects of Lebanese origin found in south Levantine sites. Most impressive are the remains of cedar beams found in the large patrician house at Tell el-Ifshar and at Tel Nami, probably offloaded from a ship (or recovered from the wreck of one) carrying Lebanese timber toward Ashqelon or Egypt.¹²⁷ Elaborate painted pottery with Syro-Cilician elements from the same two sites is

probably to be assigned a north Levantine origin as well. A specific pithos type, with a ridged rim, has cropped up at Ashqelon, Tell Ifshar and Tell el-Burak, with Lebanon its most likely point of origin.¹²⁸ This is one of the north Levantine types appearing in Twelfth Dynasty levels at Tell ed-Dab'a, which presumably was the southern terminus of the coastal route.

Middle Cypriot White Painted jugs and juglets with Crossed Line and Pendent Line decoration appear in minute quantities during most of MB I, but become more frequent in late MB I tomb assemblages. Louise Maguire has suggested that they mark the establishment of a network of exchange that encompassed Cyprus, the Levant and Egypt, characterized by the circulation of "Precious Commodity Containers" (including Levantine Painted ware, Tell el-Yahudiya and – in MB II – red polished juglets), presumably with the "precious commodities" included.¹²⁹ It is far from clear what else might have been traded, since, for example, the circulation of Cypriot copper is not well documented for the MBA. She notes that the "tomb package," with a marked presence of small containers, is shared in the three regions.

The upshot of this rather mixed bag of archaeological tidbits may be significant: it seems that the extremely small volume of commodities involved in the emerging sea trade in MB I cannot support a trade-based impetus for the colonization of the coastal Levant south of Tyre; rather, the proximity of seagoing vessels on the Byblos run could have been an added attraction and, especially, a potential source of prestige for local elites. Based on the traded commodities alone, and leaving aside obvious royal gifts (primarily at Byblos), a difference can be seen between Egyptian objects – which appear to be functional and perhaps only offshoots of vessel-servicing and provisioning along the Canaanite coast – and Lebanese/Cypriot decorated containers, which seem to carry more prestige and might have been exchanged as commodities or gifts.

CONCLUSION: THE FIRST PHASE OF THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

Archaeologically, early MB I has been described above as a gradual transformation, with an injection of Syrian ("Amorite"?) materials and technology, accreting around an IBA foundation. The large centers that developed during MB I on the coast and in the northern valleys are often characterized as urban, but while they are doubtless important, multifunctional centers of economic and political power, their density of occupation, at this stage, is open to debate. Rather than urbanism, the growth of these centers appears to reflect the emergence of an entrepreneurial political elite that capitalized on the economic opportunities offered by a depopulated countryside, and to a lesser degree by the resurgence of coastal trade, in the early second millennium. They may be characterized as fortified manorial estates, some of which were on the way to become centers of population and administration and,

eventually, cities. Their salient characteristic – setting them apart from earlier centralized polities – was their bold appropriation of large portions of the landscape, often accompanied by the creation of artificial mounds at strategic locations, and their incorporation of important functions such as water distribution and ceramic production. Urbanism, in the form of dense domestic occupation in towns, the consolidation of religious and administrative institutions and an integrative relation with a rural countryside, became established only in MB II, after 1800 BCE.

The Birth of the Alphabet

In our discussion of the EBA encounter between Egypt and the Levant, we noted the apparent absence of any long-term impact of Egyptian values and practices in Levantine societies. Despite a strong Egyptian presence, whether as colonizers on the southwest coast in the late fourth millennium or as agents of royal interests and raw-material procurement in third-millennium Byblos, Egyptian political and cultural values seem to have left few traces in the structure or material culture of local communities. The Middle Bronze Age episode of Egyptian–Levantine contact differed significantly in this respect. The increased connectivity in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, characterized by Broodbank as the co-evolution and convergence of cultural currents, seems to have been accompanied by a more cosmopolitan outlook in all countries concerned. Despite protestations to the contrary and the anti-migration rhetoric preserved in Egyptian writings, there is plenty of archaeological evidence for ethnic mixing, religious syncretism and cultural interference.¹³⁰ These accompany the renewal of maritime commerce along the Levantine coast in Middle Kingdom times, bringing Asiatics and Asiatic goods to Egypt and Egyptians and Egyptian goods to the Lebanese coast, and are maintained in the Second Intermediate Period and during the time of Hyksos rule in Egypt, when contact between the southwestern coast and the Nile Delta seems to have been most intense. While many aspects of cultural exchange were either short-lived (e.g., the practice of equid burial in the Egyptian delta) or of seemingly superficial significance (e.g., the adoption of the scarab as an apotropaic charm and decorative accessory in Canaan), some had a profound impact in the receiving cultures, realized only after the passage of time. Among the latter we should include the invention of the alphabet by West Asians who lived and labored in an Egyptian milieu. While this might seem to be an internal Egyptian affair – the earliest inscriptions were found in the Sinai and Egypt alone, and the alphabet was not adopted as a mode of communication or administration by any Canaanite polity – its long-delayed impact on Mediterranean culture, and eventually that of Europe and the world, was mediated – after a long gestation in Canaan – by post-Canaanite cultures along the Levantine coast. The alphabet may rightly be claimed to be Canaan's gift to the world.

The existence of pseudo-hieroglyphic inscriptions in and near the Serabit el-Khadim turquoise mines of western Sinai was first noted by W.M.F. Petrie in 1905. Today, about thirty inscriptions in the mines and along routes leading to

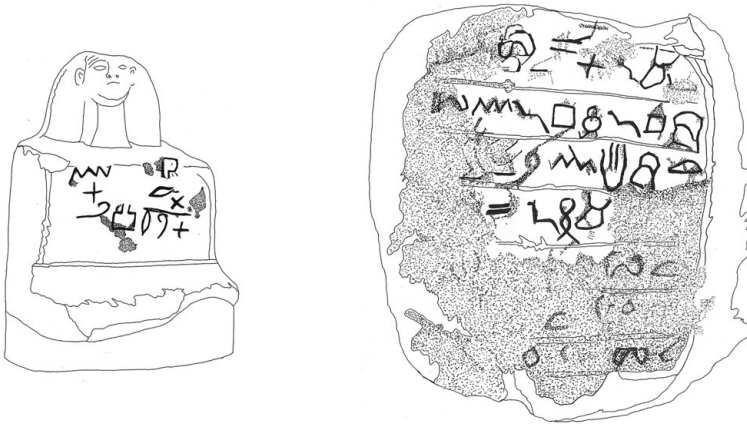


Figure 5.15 Proto-Sinaitic dedicatory inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadim in western Sinai: the inscription on the statue base includes a dedication to the patron goddess (*b'lt*) of the mines, while the stela mentions the West Asian master miner (*rb nqbnm*) who dedicated it. After Hamilton 2006: 335, 339 (by permission).

them have been identified, alongside the prominent remains of the state-sponsored Egyptian enterprises of Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom times (Figure 5.15). Two inscriptions discovered in 1998 in the Wadi el-Hol, about 20 kilometers northwest of Thebes, add vital information concerning the date of the appearance of the Proto-Sinaitic script.¹³¹ Intensively studied since their first decipherment a century ago,¹³² a recent and compelling narrative concerning their conceptual origin and cultural and social setting is that presented in a series of publications by Orly Goldwasser.¹³³

It is broadly agreed that the earliest alphabetic script was derived from Egyptian hieroglyphic and hieratic signs, using the acrophonic principle; that is, the phonetic value of each letter is provided by the first consonant of the Semitic word indicated by the Egyptian sign. Thus, an Egyptian eye sign (*'iri*, meaning “to do”) is “read” as the Canaanite word for eye, *'ayin*, and signifies the phoneme /'/. The Egyptian sign for the phoneme /n/ is “read” as the Canaanite word for water, *mayim*, and signifies /m/, and so on. This has allowed most of the inscriptions to be deciphered, with those of Serabit being identified as dedicatory inscriptions to the patroness of the mines, the Mistress of Turquoise, Hathor – identified by the miners as the Canaanite goddess Ba'alat – or to the male god 'El. One of the persons making the dedicatory offerings is termed *rab naqbanim* – or “Master Miner.”

Goldwasser identifies the turquoise mines at Serabit as the locus of the invention, and attributes it to “illiterate” Canaanite miners, that is, people with access to Egyptian writing – e.g., at the temple of Hathor in Serabit itself – but with no understanding of its transcription or meaning. She identifies several conditions, unique to Serabit, that could have facilitated the invention: the isolated location,

which encouraged interaction among members of the diverse work force; the stress associated with the risks and the hardships of the mining venture, which would have motivated its members to seek divine protection; the pervasiveness of commemorative stelae and inscriptions erected by Egyptian officials; and the Canaanites' ignorance of hieroglyphic script, which would allow them to liberate the signs from their meaning and transform their role in an unprecedented way.

The remoteness and low status of the alphabet's inventors also explains, in Goldwasser's view, why the invention had no impact in Egypt and took so long to take root in Canaanite culture, despite its seeming advantages of simplicity and flexibility: elite culture in the ancient Near East incorporated a rich literary and lapidary tradition, in which the writing itself – especially in Egypt – was richly resonant with conceptual and stylistic connotations. An alphabetic script would have appeared artless – conceptually spare, aesthetically unpleasing and ineloquent. Moreover, its democratic appeal would have earned it few champions in established hierarchies, where scribal knowledge was power. Rejected by elites, the tradition of alphabetic writing remained in the realm of the subaltern, where it took on a power of its own, the power of words and sounds rather than signs. It is surely no accident that Canaanite scripts and their first-millennium descendants never developed a true lapidary style, and that the number of official and administrative texts in the ancient southern Levant is negligible, in comparison with letters, private dedicatory and funerary inscriptions, popular mythology and religious poetry and prose.

MB II: NEW FRONTIERS, URBAN CONSOLIDATION

If the second millennium can, in its entirety, be characterized as the Canaanite millennium, then the MB II must be its high-water mark, in terms of settlement expansion and the flowering of a recognizable and distinct cultural idiom. In this 200-year period, between c. 1800 and c. 1600 BCE, south Levantine MBA culture asserted itself as a highland–lowland network, Mediterranean in its economic and political positioning within the landscape,¹³⁴ but much less so in terms of actual connectivity, since connections with the greater Mediterranean world (beyond its immediate neighbors) remained rather tenuous. Indeed, the new MB I polities of the Levant, whether picking up where the third millennium left off, as on the Lebanese coast, or repopulating a minimally exploited countryside, as in the southern Levantine littoral, might be thought to have been poised to establish a powerful coastal confederation with a strong maritime presence. But this was not, in fact, to be. Instead, the spirit of MBA political enterprise turned inward, toward new frontiers: the central highlands west, and to some extent east, of the Jordan River. Within a span of decades, the central highlands underwent a process similar to that of the inland valleys a century and a half earlier; scattered ephemeral settlements and

cemeteries that show continuity between IBA and MBA (late MB I or early MB II) usage gave way to a plethora of new fortified centers, such as Shechem, Tell el-Far'ah (North), Tel Dothan and Shiloh in the Samarian region, and Jerusalem and Tell el-Rumeida (Hebron) to their south, and to sturdily built villages, of which a few have been excavated, mainly in the vicinity of Jerusalem (see Figure 5.2, above, and Figure 5.20, below). Reviews of the intensively surveyed central highlands of the southern Levant have identified no fewer than 400 MBA locations (excluding about 100 tombs or cemeteries), the great majority first occupied in the MB II.¹³⁵ Other inland areas flourished as well: the Lebanese Bika' saw a marked increase in the number and size of settlements, from twenty-eight to sixty-one, with Kamid el-Loz attaining prominence in the center of the valley.¹³⁶ Northern Jordan Valley settlement was dominated by the great city of Hazor, while fortified settlement expanded southward along the valley to Bet Shean, Tell Abu al-Kharaz, Tell Deir 'Alla, Tell Nimrin and Jericho. In the Jezreel Valley the number of settlements was on the rise,¹³⁷ expanding the reach of towns in the agricultural hinterland, while among excavated sites, Megiddo expanded, Yoqne'am declined somewhat, and Ta'anakh bloomed late in the period. In the Transjordanian highlands, settlement did not reach the same intensity as in the west. About thirty sites are reported in the major recent surveys of the north and central regions, including about half a dozen fortified sites that have seen limited excavation.¹³⁸ In southern Syria, Hauran settlement was renewed in MB II, with villages established along all the wadis and fortified sites (such as Bosra and Sharaya) associated with sophisticated water diversion and collection systems. On the semi-arid/arid interface, micro-catchment systems collecting surface runoff are attested in Jawa (where an MB II fort was identified) and near Kh. Umbashi.¹³⁹

The coastal region saw continuity at some sites, the decline of others and the founding or significant growth of new sites both in the north (e.g., Akhziv, Kabri) and particularly in the south (the tells of Ajjul, Jemmeh, Far'ah [South], Haror, Najila and Ashdod among those excavated). Gophna and Portugali note a modest uptick, from about fifty to about sixty, in the number of coastal plain sites in MB II, as compared to MB I, and although their list is somewhat out of date, it accurately identifies a southward shift in the center of gravity of settlement, as the southwest coast gained prominence in the latter part of the period, possibly owing to its affinity with the Fifteenth ("Hyksos") Dynasty in Egypt.¹⁴⁰ Further inland, at the interface between the plains and the hills, settlement growth was modest, with the establishment of fortified sites at Gezer, Bet Shemesh and Lachish,¹⁴¹ and the urbanization of Tell Beit Mirsim.

The abandonment of several sites along the coast, such as Tel Burga, Tel Poleg, Tel Nami and Tell el-Burak, as well as the absence of imported vessels at Sidon¹⁴² and the declining importance of Byblos, doubtless reflects a decline in Egyptian maritime traffic and influence along the northern part of the

Levantine coast in late Middle Kingdom times and in the Second Intermediate Period. This decline was offset by the increasing productivity and complexity of the Canaanite polities proper. For the first time since the EB II, more than a millennium earlier, it is possible to identify integrated settlement clusters focused on a central place that often exhibits visible urban characteristics.

MB II fortified settlements incorporated MB I principles of construction: new rampart enclosures were founded in low-lying areas along the coast and in the plains, hill sites were girded with walls and supplementary ramparts topped with glacis, and fortresses were built at strategic locations. As in MB I, the fortified centers enclosed water reservoirs, wells and springs; an innovation of this period were the subterranean systems that appropriated water sources that lay at the foot of the city mound. Another innovation was the construction of massive fortified temples on the town acropolises, signifying the appropriation of cult by city elites. Together with the wells and water systems, city mounds now each constituted an *axis mundi*, linking the nether worlds to the celestial ones through the mediation of the man-made (or at least improved) mountain.

In a noteworthy departure from earlier periods, the evidence for a second millennium presence in arid zones is minimal. The southern border of sedentary settlement is marked by typical MB II fortified settlements on the border of the Negev, at Tel Masos and Tel Malhata. On the eastern side of the rift, the site of Zahrat adh-Dhra' provides the only excavated window into settlement on the desert margins. Neither the Negev Highlands nor the Arabah Valley and its mineral resources show any signs of occupation or exploitation, as pastoral groups were co-opted by the urban economies and the new maritime and overland trade routes brought in massive quantities of bronze artifacts and raw materials, apparently rendering the exploitation of Arabah resources uneconomical.

Pottery

The vibrant MB II pottery industries of Canaan evolve seamlessly from MB I. Isolated kilns still crop up occasionally, but as towns became more densely settled, urban industries appear to be the norm, with the large towns showing the most diverse and articulated assemblages. Imports remained rare and are almost completely confined to burial contexts. In this sense, MB II pottery is the apotheosis of the local Canaanite style, which has distanced itself from Syrian origins and not yet taken on the international flavor of the later second millennium BCE (Figure 5.16).

Generally, red slip and burnish is infrequent in MB II, although some types of fine wares in late MB II may show a white burnished slip. Open bowls tend to increase in size, open carinated bowls are prominent, and a particularly fine, eggshell-quality ware appears, used primarily for cups and goblets. An emphasis on drinking ensembles is evident, with a proliferation of tall, elegant pedestaled goblets and mixing bowls and kraters. There are some, but not many, regional

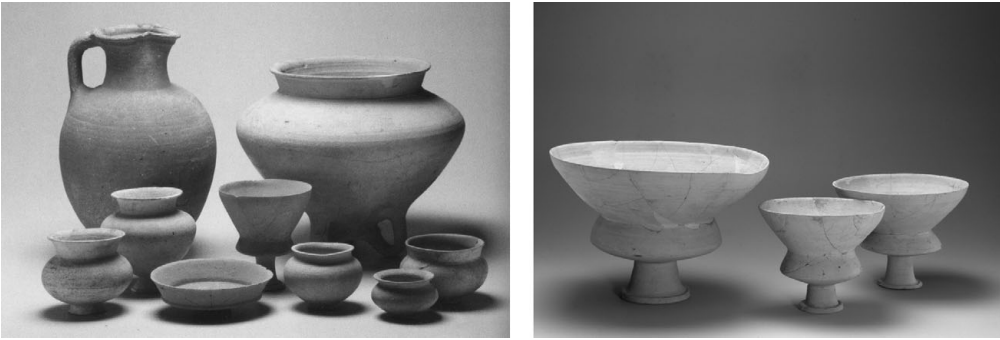


Figure 5.16 MB II fine wares. Photo by G. Vinitsky, MUSA, Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv.

peculiarities, such as the appearance of quatrefoil carinated bowls and yellow-slipped painted juglets in upper Jordan Valley sites, two- or four-handled pithoi in the highlands and southern plains, and white slips and red/white/blue decoration in the southern plains. Two specialized industries – Chocolate-on-White ware and Bichrome ware, attributed to the very end of the MB II – are discussed separately in the final section of this chapter.

The main MB II types include footed round and, increasingly, open carinated bowls, with closed carinated types still present at the beginning of the period. Tall goblets with a constricted neck and a trumpet base are a hallmark of the period, as are ridged open goblets on a high base, which, accompanied by chalices and cylindrical stands, typify ceremonial contexts. Kraters include a massive mixing vessel resting on three loop handles and a large deep krater with rope decoration. Straight-walled handmade cooking ware continues from the MB I, with its (unperforated) impressed band placed along the rim, as do wheelmade cooking pots, either globular or carinated, with thickened or inverted rim. Baking trays are also common. Pithoi are common in MB II, usually with a tall neck. In the north, they generally lack handles, with the northernmost types marked by a raised-impressed band that becomes a hallmark of northern Jordan Valley pithoi throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.¹⁴³ Central hill pithoi have four handles, often arranged in pairs on two sides of the vessel. In the latter part of MB II, the Canaanite jar, with a pronounced shoulder and pointed base, appears. Among the jugs, jar-jugs with shoulder handles are notable, whereas the pointed piriform and large cylindrical juglets with beaded rim replace most other forms.

While in the third millennium, three-dimensional zoomorphic figurines, fashioned out of the clay coils used in fashioning pots, were the province of potters of the various documented industries, second-millennium potters turned to the sculpted vessel and the head-cup (Figure 5.17). Sculpted vessels include libation vases shaped as bulls, ibexes, donkeys or birds, made in fine buff ware, sometimes painted.¹⁴⁴ In addition, there are vessels made in the Tell

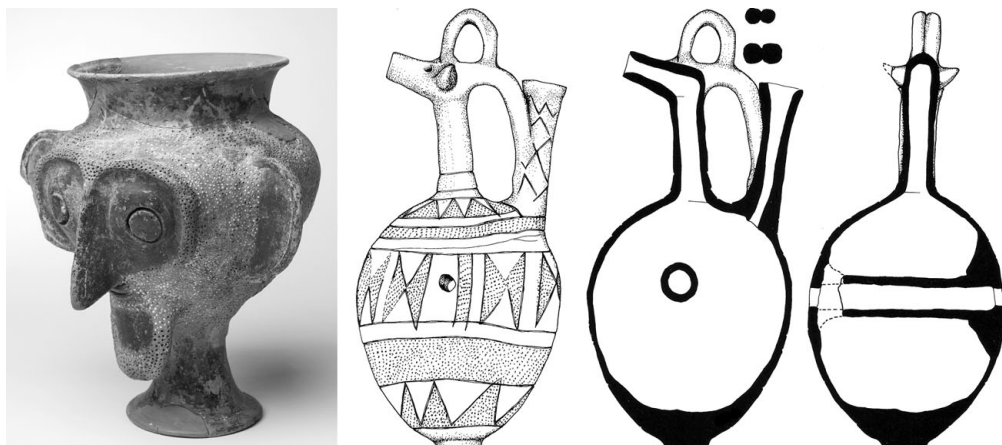


Figure 5.17 Two sculpted ceramic libation vessels in the Tell el-Yahudiya technique: a head-cup from Jericho (photo by M. Suchowolski, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority) and a zoomorphic trick vessel from Tur'an (after Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005: fig. 11; by permission of the Israel Antiquities Authority).

el-Yahudiya technique, such as a gazelle-headed trick vase from a grave in Tur'an¹⁴⁵; a recently discovered red-slipped jug carries the finely sculpted figure of a seated man lost in thought. Head-cups include gazelle-shaped and human-faced drinking cups in standard wares and in Tel el-Yahudiya ware – of the two outstanding drinking sets from Jericho, one comprised a juglet, strainer and ram's-head rhyton (see above section on “Warrior Tombs”), and the other includes a strainer and an anthropomorphic cup showing the prominent features of a bearded man.¹⁴⁶

FOUR REPRESENTATIVE MB II POLITIES

The diverse aspects of Canaanite polities – their structural components, their longevity and the degree of their economic integration and political centralization – may be illustrated by means of four paradigmatic cases, each representing a different geographic region and a different set of historical contingencies: Hazor and the upper Jordan Valley are in a class of their own, belonging to the league of Syrian city-states characterized by Glenn Schwartz as the “Amorite Global Village”; Tel Kabri, with its frescoed manor house, belongs to the boom-and-bust polities of the Mediterranean littoral; Jerusalem is an integrated, but still short-lived, highland polity; whereas Tell el-'Ajjul and its sister-cities of the southwest plains have been identified as a possible coalition of towns closely allied to Hyksos Egypt.

Hazor and the Upper Jordan Valley

The earliest MBA settlement at Tel Hazor is recorded only in late MB I (Stratum Pre-XVII), but the presence on the mound of a large tomb,

T. 1181, with eleven interments and about 130 ceramic vessels that span the MB I–II transition, and the concomitant beginning of rampart construction on the eastern terrace of the site, nearly doubling its size, indicate that something was afoot.¹⁴⁷ Within a short span of time, at the start of the MB II, a huge enclosure was erected, extending north from the original hill and EBA mound and encompassing an area of 80 hectares (Figure 5.18).¹⁴⁸ The western flank of the enclosure consists of a massive rampart, standing 90 meters wide and 15 meters above the fosse that runs along its base. A deep depression lies at the south end of the rampart, where it approaches the high mound. On the north and eastern sides of the enclosure, the rampart is far less prominent, but still rises about 30 meters above the adjacent plain. Two gates were built on the eastern flank of the lower city, one in Area P, at the junction of the mound and the enclosure, or lower city, and one near the northeast angle of the enclosure (Area K). Set into the earthen ramparts, and bonded with them by means of an elaborate system of stepped casemate walls and revetments, the gates have a classic six-chambered plan that was first introduced in MB I Syria and became standard in the late MB I and MB II southern Levant. A massive retaining wall, built of cyclopean boulders, supports the entrance ramp and gate plaza facing the later phase of the Area K gate, and must have offered an imposing sight to those approaching the site from the main north–south highway.

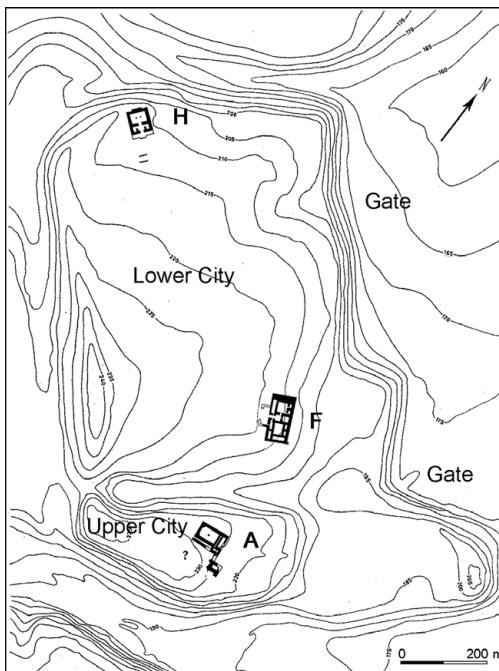


Figure 5.18 Topographic plan of Tel Hazor, with MBA cultic compounds indicated in Areas H, F and A. Redrawn after Zuckerman 2012: fig. 5.

Sharon Zuckerman's recent review of the results of both the Yadin and Ben-Tor expeditions to Hazor indicates that, as in other MBA sites, the city developed from the outside in.¹⁴⁹ That is, the ramparts were the first element to be constructed (Stratum 4 in the Lower Town, and XVII in the Upper Mound), followed by the creation of a ritual axis composed of a northern node, the temple built on the rampart in Area H; a southern node, the ceremonial compound built on the high mound, on the south (Area A); and an intermediate node, the subterranean complex and subsequent double temple in Area F, in the southeast part of the lower enclosure. Domestic architecture appeared only after the ramparts were built, in Stratum 3 of the lower town, in tandem with the temple construction, and seems to have filled large parts of the lower compound only in the Late Bronze Age. A large, deep depression at the south end of the western rampart might mark the location of a water reservoir or well; extensive rock-cut tunnels found beneath the Area F temple may also have originated as part of a system of water collection.¹⁵⁰

The three temple complexes each differ from the other. The Area H temple – an important ritual center that was maintained and rebuilt several times during Middle and Late Bronze Ages (see below, Chapter 6, Figure 6.12) – was built in the second phase of MB II settlement (Stratum 3) on a fill at the foot of the already-extant rampart, facing inward (southward) toward the lower town and high tell. In this phase it consisted of a main broad-room hall with two central columns and a cult niche in its northern wall, approached from a narrow, tripartite porch fronted by a flight of steps leading to a large paved courtyard. As this temple was subsequently renovated, not much of its cultic paraphernalia survived. The mid-town temple in Area F was also founded in the late MB II, above a series of rock-hewn tunnels, shafts and chambers of uncertain use.¹⁵¹ Poorly preserved, it was reconstructed as a double temple, each wing composed of a central courtyard surrounded by small rooms. The southern temple compound (Figure 5.19), which appears to have been part of a walled royal acropolis, is composed of an open-air field of stelae, a large long-room, a Syrian-style sanctuary (the Southern Temple), and several storage and service structures.¹⁵² The 15 × 20 meter massive Southern Temple, oriented east–west, with a corner entrance on the east end of its northern long wall and a broad, shallow niche in the western wall, is part of a larger monumental complex, most likely a palace. A central favissa, which seems to have been extended through several stages of renovation, supplied the only finds in this structure, probably representing its latest use. They included chalices, miniature votive bowls, exquisite “eggshell” goblets and two bird-shaped libation vessels, as well as quotidian vessels (cooking pots, lamps, jars and dippers) and thousands of mammal bones representing a minimum of about 100 butchered animals, of which about 80 percent were sheep/goat and the rest cattle and a handful of wild species.¹⁵³



Figure 5.19 Aerial view of the upper city MBA cult area; the ‘Southern Temple’ at top right and the stela field and associated installations at bottom left. Photo courtesy of the Selz Foundation Hazor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The open-air standing-stones precinct lay outside the monumental compound, abutting its southern wall. It comprised a complex of courtyards and roofed chambers furnished with benches. About thirty aniconic standing slabs were discovered, in several rows oriented north to south. They sometimes formed pairs of one large (60-centimeter) and one small (30-centimeter) slab, and were often fronted with offering tables located in their western side. Finds in this precinct included three metal figurines, two of bronze and one of silver, in the style of those found in coastal sites and at Megiddo. Remains of ritual meals are reported here as well, with few details.

The juxtaposition of the two religious structures, the one, restricted in access and characterized by formal ritual practices, associated with the palace, and the other, representing popular ancestral commemoration, abutting it from the outside, suggest that the southern ceremonial complex was the political core of the MBA city at Hazor. Here, on the ancient EBA mound, the continuity and legitimacy of the leading families (in the field of stelae) and the ruling dynasty (in the Southern Temple) could be affirmed in tandem. It is a telling fact that both ceremonial complexes were carefully sealed prior to the construction of the new, massive Late Bronze Age palace temple (or “ceremonial palace”) and its adjoining courts and platforms (see Chapter 6).

The growing power of Hazor, which eventually became ranked with the leading cities of Syria as portrayed in the Mari correspondence of the eighteenth century BCE, is reflected in the settlement history of its immediate environs. Canaanite Laish (Tel Dan), which appeared to be heading toward dominance in late MB I, when its ramparts and arched gate were completed, seems to have been a casualty of Hazor's dominance. Its eastward-facing gate was sealed in early MB II and never replaced, although the town as a whole seems to have maintained its urban status, judging by extent of subfloor burial chambers, which are the principle source of evidence for the MB II town.¹⁵⁴ Several other Hula Valley sites were virtually abandoned, including Tel Na'ama and the fortress of Qiryat Shemona. Survey results show a dearth of MB II settlement in the environs of Hazor, suggesting that their population was absorbed by the burgeoning city, and that it maintained direct control of agricultural land in the valley and its margins. Looking farther afield, Aren Maier has suggested that the ceramic province represented at Hazor can serve as a proxy for the extent of its political domination. This presumed ceramic province – which has yet to be laid out in detail – would encompass the northern Jordan Valley, the Lebanese Biqa', the Hauran and the Damascus basin, and include fortified sites such as Tel Dan, Tel Abel, Kamid el-Loz, Bosra and Tell Sakka.¹⁵⁵

Epigraphic finds, as yet limited in number, testify to Hazor as a center of literacy and diplomacy in the eighteenth century BCE. They include legal, ritual, and commercial/diplomatic texts. Wayne Horowitz¹⁵⁶ writes that the legal texts, which include the fragment of a law code (Hazor Tablet 18), establish Hazor as among “a select group of independent capitals and kingdoms that issued their own sets of laws, including Hammurabi's Babylon” and the commercial texts confirm Hazor as an “important center for the production of and trade in textiles and clothing.”

Hazor Tablet 5 both attests to the use of cuneiform writing in Hazor's royal legal system and reflects the extent of the jurisdiction of the king, beyond the borders of the city: “Bin-Hanuta with Irpadu and Sum-Hanuta, three junior attendants, initiated a lawsuit against Sumulailum in regard to a home and a garden in the city of Hazor, and a garden in the city of Gilead (?). Before the king they came in. The king (in favour of) the case of Sumulailum rend[ered] judgment.”¹⁵⁷ Hazor Tablet 10 describes the contents of a large consignment of textiles and other valuables, possibly to be identified as a contribution sent from Hazor for the dowry of a princess from Mari, of which the following is an excerpt:

2' 60 [luxury g]arments;

3' 60 first-class delicate cloths; 120 [second-class] delicate cloths;

4' 60 first-class sakkum cloths; 120 [second-class] sakkum cloths;

5' 60 first-class zakûm cloths; 120 second class zakûm cloths; . . .

- ...
 16' 1,000 headbands;
 17' 5,000 headdresses; 3,000 silver rivets;
 18' 1,000 gold rivets;
 19' 2,000 bows; 2,000 bronze ...:
 20' let them send to me quickly to Mari.
 21' Some mishap might happen!¹⁵⁸

The status of Hazor as a virtual equal to Mari and Babylon marks it almost as a separate entity from the rest of the southern Levant, where central institutions had far less power, influence and long-term stability than that evidenced at Hazor through the greater part of the second millennium. If Hazor may be characterized as a Canaanite city-state in the Syro-Mesopotamian mold, the rest of the countryside requires a somewhat different characterization, as we shall see below.

Kabri and the Western Galilee

The site of Tel Kabri is strategically located on one of the main streams draining the Galilee hills, about 5 kilometers from the coast (where Tel Nahariya could have served as its seaport), in proximity to two prolific springs. Excavations headed by A. Kempinski and W.D. Niemeier in the 1980s, complemented by renewed excavation and survey headed by E. Cline and A. Yasur-Landau, have revealed that Kabri was an important Early Bronze I and II center that was abandoned early in the third millennium and resettled early in MB I, in a modest way, with only a few domestic structures recorded in the earlier excavations (attributed to Phase VII, in the current stratigraphic scheme).¹⁵⁹ In a later phase of MB I, a massive structure – tentatively identified as a fortress – replaced the earlier houses, on the site of what was later to become a large manor or palatial estate. At about this time, construction began on what was to become the third-largest fortified enclosure of the southern Levant (after Hazor and Ashqelon), with the erection of an earthen rampart faced on its interior and exterior with massive walls (the relation between these three elements is not sufficiently clear; it seems likely they represent a cumulative process of buttressing the relatively simple earthen berm). As in other MBA sites, the enclosure brought one of the main springs within the confines of the fortified area.¹⁶⁰ Excavations within the enclosure, although limited, do not indicate dense settlement. The palace, currently estimated to have occupied an area of 6,000 square meters,¹⁶¹ lies in the eastern part of the enclosure (Area D), with no associated domestic structures yet reported. A large walled compound, partly covered by the northern rampart (Area C), included living quarters, a courtyard housing a potter's kiln, and several cist burials and built tombs beneath the rooms of the compound and just outside its walls.¹⁶² Tomb

498 (see Figure 5.24), situated near the entrance to the compound, consisted of a square entrance shaft in which several broken lamps were deposited, leading – through a sealed entrance – into a rectangular chamber, 3.2 meters long, 1.8 meters wide and 1.4 meters high, roofed with massive stone slabs. The chamber was filled with skeletal remains of at least twenty-three individuals and 339 pottery vessels ranging in date from the mid-MB I to the early MB II, at which time the tomb was formally sealed. The termination deposit consisted of groups of storage jars and a jug placed right and left of the entrance, a goblet placed over the jars and a carinated bowl containing a dipper juglet over the jug. Elsewhere in the site, only tombs remained of the MB II habitation, recalling the situation encountered at other large enclosures such as Ashqelon and Tel Burga.

According to the latest radiocarbon evidence, the rise and fall of the palatial estate at Kabri transpired within a span of 100 years, ending by 1700 BC, before the end of the MB II. The excavators describe a three- or four-stage process, during which a palatial structure that replaced the earlier fortress underwent gradual expansion until it became a large complex, including reception halls and several storerooms. Only its two later phases (Strata IV and III) are known to any great extent. In the former stage, before the palace reached its apogee, several rooms, including a large audience hall, were decorated with floor and wall frescoes executed in a technology and style that had an affinity to Aegean (Minoan and Thera) traditions. The 10 × 10 meter plastered hall was decorated with a painted grid, probably intended to convey the impression of stone slabs strewn with flowers. Some parts of the floor bore a marbled color pattern, while others had delicately painted flowers – irises and crocuses – in blue and yellow. The wall frescoes were found in a fragmentary state, in secondary deposition, after they had been removed during the final renovation of the palace. They include land-, town- and seascapes comparable to the miniature wall paintings of Thera. Now dated to the eighteenth century BCE, they should fall comfortably within the Middle Minoan period, well in advance of the Thera eruption. Their presence represents a moment when the ruling elite at Kabri saw itself as being on par with other palatial centers of the Eastern Mediterranean littoral, such as Alalakh and Qatna, but their rapid destruction by the palace dwellers themselves suggests that the alignment of the Kabri elites with the international network of palatial elites was short-lived.

The last phase of the estate has been the focus of the recent (and ongoing) excavations at Kabri. Detailed study of the fauna, the ceramic industry, and especially of several rooms packed with wine-filled jars (and a few empty ones) provide an unprecedented picture of an eighteenth-century BCE palatial economy (Figure 5.20).¹⁶³ According to the preliminary results of the faunal analysis, palace inhabitants relied on diverse sources of meat, but little evidence of specialized supply is indicated. Likewise, evidence for textile production was found, but only of household-level production. An impressive amount of wine

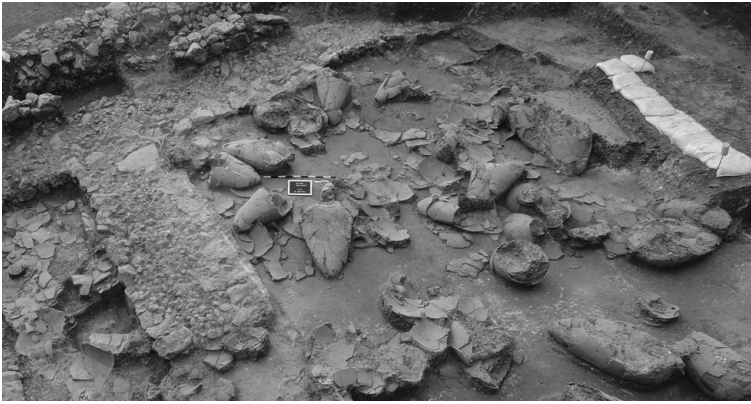


Figure 5.20
Smashed jars in the
wine cellar of the
Tel Kabri palatial
estate. Photo by
E. H. Cline.
Courtesy of the Tel
Kabri Expedition.

appears to have been stored – perhaps 4,000 liters at a time, but – as a yearly total – this would have been sufficient only for the needs of the immediate palatial household, its retainers and clients, and for occasional feasts and entertainments. Pottery production and consumption was almost entirely local, with very few imported objects. Notably, a special type of drinking cup was produced at Kabri, and the greater part of the ceramics found in the adjacent part of the palace was related to the storage, decanting and consumption of liquids. Thus, the palace may have had a resident potter, or might have commissioned a specific range of products for its use (“Kabri cups” were found elsewhere on the site, especially in mortuary settings, where drinking must have been part of ritual practice). Yasur-Landau and his collaborators take this evidence to indicate that the palace was best characterized as an outsized household, operating an economy compatible with that of a large family estate in a Mediterranean setting. It had a very limited administrative apparatus and did not engage in extensive commerce, redistribution of staples, or centralized production of commodities.

In their review of settlement patterns in the Kabri countryside,¹⁶⁴ the current excavators identify a dynamic in which several small, independent villages were abandoned when Kabri, dominated by its palace, grew to maximal size in the MB II, their populace either absorbed into new centers or relocating to less accessible locations. They also identified several hilltop sites that may have been established as forts by the rulers of Kabri.¹⁶⁵ In their view, Kabri established itself as a central place, possibly exerting its influence over secondary centers at Akko, Akhziv (which was fortified at this time) and Tel Avdon. They note, however, that several of these presumed secondary centers continued to exist after the demise of Kabri, suggesting that the degree of their integration with the central site was not particularly strong. Ultimately, Kabri emerges as a poor man’s Hazor or, perhaps more aptly, as a somewhat upgraded manorial center or principality in the spirit of the earlier MB

I entities. Its survival was based on the initiative and ambition of its leading family, which succeeded, for a time, in recruiting the labor and produce of neighboring villagers by forging coalitions, creating a system of mutual obligations and offering the tangible rewards and implied sanctions of patronage. The presence of Aegean-style frescoes at the site is noteworthy, but seems to represent an isolated foray by the rulers of Kabri into the world of Mediterranean interconnections. In sum, Kabri represents the boom and bust cycle that typified many, but not all, coastal polities in the MB I–II. The mechanism that allowed some sites to persist, while others failed, will be revisited in the discussion of the MB–LB transition, below and in Chapter 6.

Jerusalem and the Hill Country

We noted above that the central highlands, west of the Jordan, exhibit a remarkable surge in settlement at the start of MB II. These areas had lagged behind the flourishing coastal plain in MB I and seem to reproduce the type of IBA–MBA continuity first glimpsed in Jordan Valley sites and cemeteries. But at the beginning of the eighteenth century BCE, perhaps in response to aggressive Egyptian “trade” expeditions on the coast, or maybe only due to the partiality of Amorite elites to political expansion and the projection of power, the highlands were transformed. There is a good number of excavated sites in the central highlands, including major fortified centers such as Shechem (Tell Balata), with its cyclopean masonry, its four- and six-chambered gates and its temple platform; Shiloh; or Hebron (Tell er-Rumeida), where cuneiform writing makes a rare appearance, but I have chosen to concentrate on Jerusalem, where the elements of an integrated highland system have come to light in the wake of extensive salvage operations conducted all around the expanding modern city.

In ancient Jerusalem itself, on the slope above the Gihon Spring and south of the hilltop that later became the Temple Mount, Middle Bronze Age remains have been discovered in every major excavation conducted since the initiation of systematic excavations in the 1920s (Maeir 2011), and particularly in the Kenyon (1962–1967), Shiloh (1978–1985) and Reich-Shukron (1995–2010) excavations.¹⁶⁶ The nature of the site, which is composed of rock terraces and scarps, and millennia of later settlement have resulted in only sporadic preservation of MBA remains. Nonetheless, enough has been discovered to ascertain that it was a fortified settlement – the first to be built at the site – and that houses were built, in several phases, on the rock terraces inside the stone fortification wall. The finds in these houses included storage pithoi, a diverse ceramic assemblage that includes fragments of Levantine Painted and imported Cypriot wares and fine craft objects, including decorated bone inlays of a type common at MB II sites (see box below on “Middle Bronze Age Crafts”). While there are a few burials that might be attributed to MB I in and

around the town site,¹⁶⁷ the main building phase is limited to the MB II. A rich, late MB II extramural tomb assemblage excavated on the nearby Mount of Olives could be assigned to one of the leading families of the town.¹⁶⁸

The outstanding feature of the Jerusalem fortifications, of which only the stone-built portions have survived (any possible ramparts having been removed during the massive Iron Age renovations), is the bold attempt to enclose the prolific water source that lay at the base of the hill, to make it accessible to the town-dwellers and to divert the excess water to a protected location where it could be appropriated for further use – presumably both in the city and in controlled garden plots nearby. According to Reich and Shukron's most recent reconstruction – which is so far supported by preliminary reports only¹⁶⁹ – the MBA water system first diverted the waters of the Gihon Spring to a shallow collecting pool, and from that pool, to a covered rock-hewn channel that might have culminated in a reservoir located outside the walls, in the nearby Kidron wadi-bed. The spring and pool were protected by a system of massive towers that protruded from the main fortification wall and were approached by means of a stepped tunnel and a roofed path between the towers. The fortified spring complex proposed by Reich and Shukron sits well with the pattern of spring and water appropriation in the MBA; however, their excavation was conducted under unusual constraints, in subterranean shafts and tunnels. These led to severe limitations on the horizontal exposure of the remains, so that changes in our understanding of the spring fortifications are likely to occur.¹⁷⁰

The magnitude of Jerusalem's fortification efforts stands in a similar relation to the resources of its rulers as the great ramparts of the lowland cities. Assuming Jerusalem's fortifications encompassed the greater part of the south-east ridge, its area would have been no greater than 6 hectares, allowing for a population of only 900–1,200 persons, according to most estimates. A calculation of the labor required to construct the curtain wall alone suggests that 40–50 laborers and 60 donkeys (driven by an additional 30 drivers) would have been recruited for a period of 24 months, spread out over 2.5 years at the minimum.¹⁷¹ The estimate might have to be doubled, if the water system and its fortifications are added to the mix. This would have necessitated, on the face of it, the recruiting of a large proportion of the maximum available labor in the town for long periods of time, either taking them out of the agricultural labor pool for two to three years or prolonging construction for a decade. However, it is not entirely clear what the labor pool actually was: if MB I settlement in the region was sparse and dispersed, as appears to have been the case, simultaneous construction and settlement could have been enabled only by a process of synoecism of local semi-pastoral communities, initiated by a local or incoming leadership and possibly enhanced by migration from lowland zones. Given the militaristic complexion of second millennium polities, the

need for a rapid deployment of defenses is understandable. The construction of a city, however, with several hundreds of families and an assertion of control over a major natural resource required a sustained commitment reinforced by the development of a communal ideology. Where Jerusalem differs to some extent from lowland centers like Afeq or Kabri is that (1) the town was too small to include the population that would have been involved in its construction, and (2) its immediate agricultural catchment was too limited to support even the small population that could have lived within its walls. These factors, in Jerusalem and in other highland towns, appear to have contributed to the creation of an integrated landscape of towns and villages that thrived together and failed together.

The drawing power of Jerusalem within such an integrated system is something of a mystery. The regional center in the third millennium BCE had been 'Ai, situated a few kilometers to the north, and it had remained a locus of memory in the IBA, as attested by the large cemeteries placed nearby in that period, some of which remained in use in MB I. The shift of focus to Jerusalem must have been both practical and symbolic. The enormous effort expended on the enclosure of the water source of Jerusalem should therefore be seen as a power move on both levels: an appropriation of a natural resource but also an appropriation of an important cosmic orifice – the Gihon Spring. In view of the later traditions regarding the sanctity of Zion,¹⁷² it would appear quite likely that the hill above the spring would have been established as a numinous location as well, and that the traditions of Jerusalem as a cosmic mountain, with the gods perched on its peak and the waters gushing out of its base, date back to MBA times.

MB II Jerusalem had a very limited agricultural catchment. Situated among ravines created by the encroaching, eastward-draining Kidron basin into the central highland ridge, the site lies some distance away from the broad Refa'im and Soreq wadi-beds and from the moderate slopes of the watershed plateau to the north. But it was surrounded by a ring of villages, hamlets and shrines, most of them situated in near agricultural land outside the immediate catchment of the town, potentially enlarging its economic base (Figure 5.21).

The site of Nahal Refa'im, on the north bank of the wadi of the same name (Arabic Buqei'ah, or Wadi el-Werd), about 3 kilometers to the southwest of Jerusalem, occupies the same site as the IBA village by the same name, described in Chapter 4.¹⁷³ It is composed of a group of well-spaced, sturdily built, multiroom houses that could each have accommodated an extended family, along with the household livestock. About twelve such houses or house clusters were excavated at the site, spread over an area of some 5 hectares on a slope above the wadi-bed (Figure 5.22). Most houses consisted of rows of rectangular or square rooms, with larger halls roofed with the aid of pillars or posts, of which the stone bases were found. Several houses showed evidence of having had a second story. House 2720, for example, consisted of seven rooms

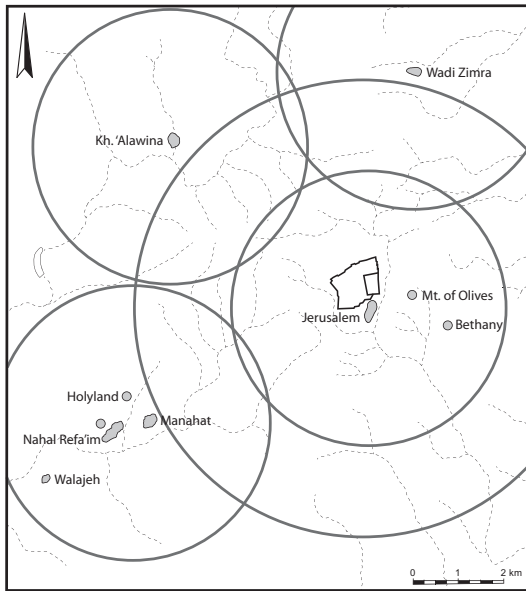


Figure 5.21 The location and catchments of MB II Jerusalem and nearby villages (shown as 3- and 5-kilometer circles); the large site of Battir falls outside the map, about 2 kilometers west of the Walajeh shrine. Map drawn by I. Ben-Ezra.

arranged in two rows, stepped with the topography of the site: the upper row consisting of four small chambers and the lower row of a large pillared hall subdivided into three small spaces (Figure 5.22). At the western, narrow end of the house there is a semicircular cell that served as a kitchen and a fenced front yard. Another house, in Area 1200, had a large circular enclosure attached to it, which might have been a corral or threshing floor. Apart from the standard food processing and preparation installations and artifacts, remains were found of local pottery production (potter's wheels, turntables, and a jar filled with dolomitic sand, quarried nearby). Notable finds in the houses include a jar with snake appliques and a mud seal carrying a scarab-seal impression. Two structures stand out at Nahal Refa'im: Building 300, set apart in the northwest corner of the site, is a particularly sturdily-built 150-square-meter house that follows a typical central-hall plan, with five small rooms flanking a pillared hall (Figure 5.22). A paved courtyard and adjunct room lie at the front of the house. Finds here included three potter's wheel components and a scarab. Building 500, similarly set apart at the southwest corner of the site, comprised a 10×5.7 meter structure with two short projecting antae. The interior of the structure included an anteroom and square hall, with their entrances placed off-center, along the same axis, facing east. The building appears to have had a fenced forecourt, while a room attached to the southeast corner, its floor at a somewhat lower level, contained a cache of cult finds: votive bowls and cups, large goblets, presentation bowls and stands. Mammal bones were also recorded in this space.

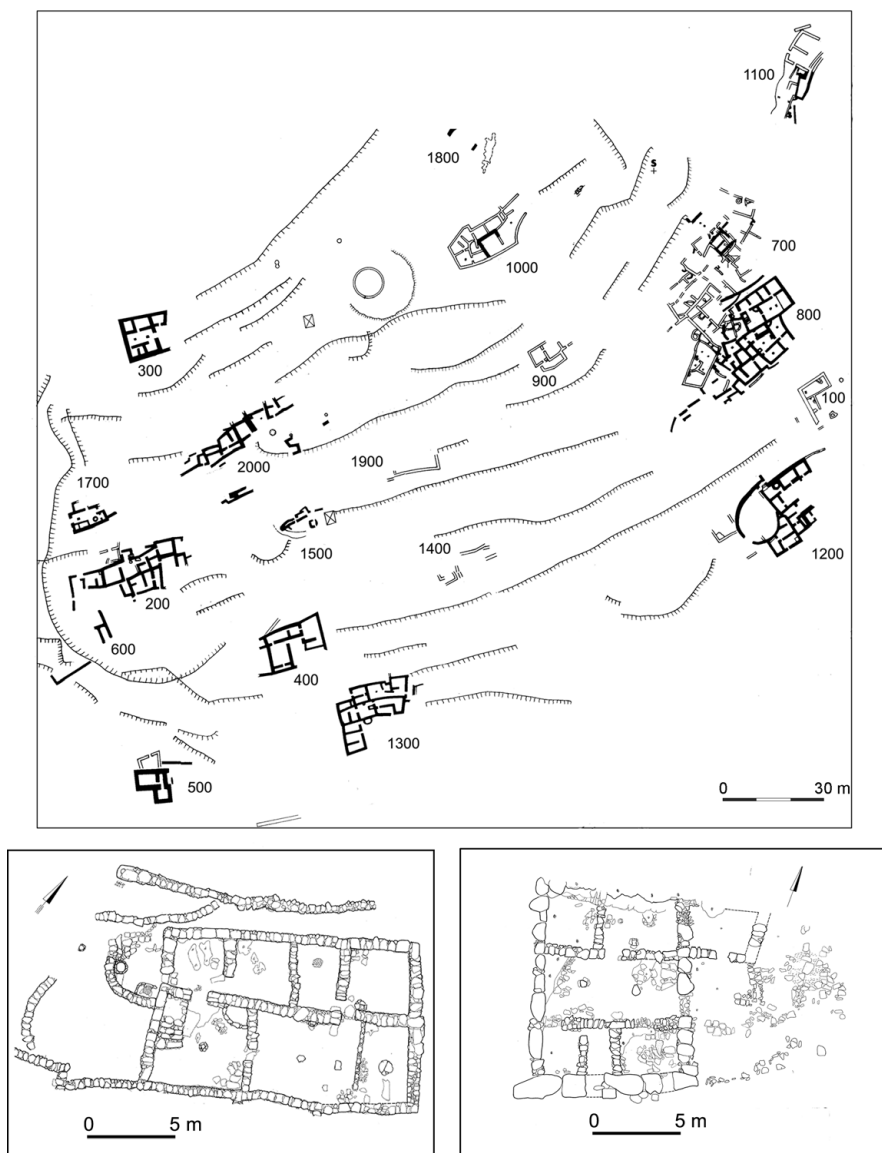


Figure 5.22 General plan of the Nahal Refa'im site in the MBA (block plans) and IBA (in outline); below, plans of Houses 2720 (left) and 300 (right). Courtesy of E. Eisenberg.

Ceramic, ground-stone and lithic finds indicate an autonomous agricultural economy that could obtain needed raw materials through small-scale exchange (e.g., bronze and scrap metal for production of simple tools, quartzolite stone for processors, and bitumen, used as a sickle-blade adhesive). The faunal analysis suggests a relative reduction in the quantity of pigs, as compared with the IBA, and an increase in the use of cattle – presumably for traction – and 65 percent sheep/goat.¹⁷⁴ Burials in and near the site included a small number

of subfloor inhumations, some 100 interments in the IBA dolomite sand quarry above the settlement, and the reuse of IBA shaft-tombs on the upper slopes of hill directly above the site. The large number of complete ceramic vessels at Nahal Refa'im, some of them clearly cached, suggest unplanned abandonment or expectation of return by the sites last inhabitants.

Less than 2 kilometers northwest of the Nahal Refa'im site, on the same side of the wadi, lies Manahat.¹⁷⁵ It is an enclosed site, occupying a much smaller area than the neighboring village (about 1.5 hectares), and consists of two large houses in the center of the site, an additional pillared structure on the east, associated with a possible shrine (a room containing several niches, a stone-lined pit, and small stelae, but lacking distinctive finds), an isolated house on the north and a row of small, contiguous broad-room structures bordering the site on the south. The site features numerous stone processors, but relatively few storage vessels or storage bins, possibly indicating that processed agricultural products were shipped out of the site. As at Nahal Refa'im, the faunal assemblage is indicative of secondary exploitation of herd animals (mainly sheep), the exploitation of cattle and equids, and fewer pigs than in the preceding IBA villages. These trends, too, can be consistent with the integration of the site in an urban-rural economy. The excavators indicate that there were traces of additional MBA structures along the terraces that run between the two adjacent sites on Nahal Refa'im, indicating almost continuous occupation of the wadi basin along a 2-kilometer stretch.

A few hundred meters upslope from Manahat lies the IBA-MBA cemetery excavated on the grounds of the former Holyland Hotel.¹⁷⁶ As might be expected, this is an IBA cemetery reused in MB II, once again highlighting the spatial continuity between these two periods and the assumption of territorial indigeneity by the MB II inhabitants. It consisted originally of perhaps as many as 100 rock-cut shaft-tombs, many of which were found empty of contents or containing evidence of much later reuse. One of the tombs, No. 27, contained a set of typical "warrior" accoutrements – a dagger with pommel, an axe and a belt – typologically of the MB II, but conceptually of the MB I. Several other tombs contained daggers as well, pointing to the survival of an older ethos at this site. Milevski et al. suggest that these components, as well as an imported Middle Kingdom scarab found in T. 112, represent an early MB II phase not recorded at the nearby sedentary villages.

Two recently excavated sites on the south side of Nahal Refa'im offer a counterpoint to the villages on the north side of the valley. On the slope beneath modern Walajeh, about 1 kilometer west of the Nahal Refa'im site, an isolated structure, identified as a shrine or temple, was excavated in 2010–2011.¹⁷⁷ Perched on a limestone terrace and protected by a sturdy terrace wall, the Walajeh complex consists of a rectangular 8 × 5 meter structure comprising an anteroom and main hall. Two square buttresses placed

asymmetrically along the east façade might represent piers or antae. Facing the building is a 50-square-meter court, with a small rectangular stone platform (altar?), showing traces of exposure to fire, and a standing stone facing the entrance to the shrine. Finds in the courtyard included cooking-pot fragments, burnt mammal bones (some of them still inside the pots) and middens with charred bones and wood, jar fragments and votive ceramic vessels. Finds inside the shrine, along its walls and benches, included presentation ware – bowls, chalices, cups and juglets, and a krater carrying applique snakes and caprid heads. Ridged goblets, similar to those found in the Nahal Refa'im village shrine, were found as well.

About 2 kilometers west of Walajeh lies the fortified MBA stronghold of Kh. al-Yahudiya (Battir), excavated in 2005–2007 and revealing massive remains, of which only a cursory description has been published.¹⁷⁸ Whether these two sites are part of the Jerusalem and Nahal Refa'im catchment, or whether the Walajeh shrine marks the border of a neighboring polity centered on Battir, must remain, for now, unresolved.

Two look-alike sites, of which only a small part has been excavated and reported, lie to the north of Jerusalem, one in the Nahal Soreq drainage basin, Kh. 'Alawina ('Alona), and one on the east side of the water divide, the site of Wadi Zimra.¹⁷⁹ Kh. 'Alawina occupies the upper terraces of a 2-hectare site reoccupied in the Iron Age II, on the northern slope of the Soreq wadi-bed. Two houses were excavated, terraced in conformity with the topography of the site. One of them might be characterized as a rustic lateral-hall building, later renovated and subdivided into smaller, irregular spaces. The Wadi Zimra site also provided evidence for an agricultural settlement built on a slope. It included at least one central-hall house with a large external courtyard and an appended row of small rooms, as well as several additional structures. Its location east of the water divide places it at an advantageous location in relation to pasturage on the relatively denuded slopes that mark the edge of the Judean desert.

Although each of the villages, hamlets and installations described above was excavated independently, they can be viewed together as part of a network of small sites surrounding a central place. Support for this reconstruction comes not only from the predicted need for a broad agricultural base, given the improbability that the small, highly fortified polity of Jerusalem could have sustained itself, but from the evidence of the sites themselves. They are coeval with the town, appearing and disappearing in tandem with MBA Jerusalem; they share a comparable material culture; and their diverse forms point to functional specialization; that is, each village might have played a somewhat different role in the system, according to its particular resources (or the interests of its patron). Economic integration would have allowed the Jerusalem polity to overcome the topographical deficiencies of its center by allying it to surplus-producing villages situated nearer to arable lands in the north and southwest

and to prime pasture to the east. Its power would have been based on the tangible control of the dependable water source of Gihon, supplemented by an intangible ideological attraction that it must already have held, one that may plausibly be linked to the many facets of mediating liminality offered by its location near the central highland water divide: between the nether and upper worlds (the spring cave and the mountain), between desert (east) and sown (west), between the northern and southern highland massifs, and even between soft chalk of the north and east and the hard limestone formations of the west. The presence of the small temple at Walajeh, the shrine at Nahal Refa'im and the possible cult corner in Manahat make it more than likely that Jerusalem itself had a significant cultic structure of its own, which would have borne a relation of patronage to the smaller temples (see below, section on "The Nature of MB II Levantine Polities").

Highland polities resembling that of Jerusalem have been excavated both to its north and south. At Tell Balata, ancient Shechem, a series of massive walls and earthworks surrounding a relatively small site (with little evidence for domestic architecture) testify to the presence of a strong centralized polity.¹⁸⁰ With settlement beginning in late MB I, between two and five stages of MB II fortification have been proposed. These begin with an early MB II wall and rampart and end with a massive expansion of the site toward the north and the construction of a large six-pier gate on the northwest, associated with a cyclopean revetment wall (Wall A), and a four-pier gate on the east side, associated with a narrower inset-offset wall (Wall B). The greater part of the excavated northwestern quadrant of the mound, including the broad, raised terrace, was occupied by the gate and associated official structures built along the perimeter of the site (identified as a palace and temple), and the enormous tower-temple, 26.3 × 21.2 meters in size. This temple faced southeast and faced a court, where a large stela and altar are supposed to have been located. The monumental structures leave no more than 3 hectares available for domestic habitation of the site – as is the rule in the hill sites. Surveys identified several possible village sites within 5–6 kilometers of the site, none of which have been excavated.

In the middle ground between Jerusalem and Shechem lie Shiloh and Bethel. Each of these sites seems to have been an independent fortified polity with a few associated villages. At Shiloh, a 3- to 4-meter-wide perimeter wall, furnished with an supplementary rampart and glacis, served as the back wall for a series of cellars in which scores of storage pithoi, and little else in the way of complete vessels, were found.¹⁸¹ Fragmentary finds that might be assigned to the unpreserved upper floors of these structures included table and cooking ware, as well as votive bowls, scarab seals and impressed clay seals, high-quality bronze weapons and silver jewelry. The mammal remains at Shiloh indicated a high proportion of young animals, when compared with contemporary village sites. These findings, along with the absence of evidence for domestic

structures, induced the excavators to suggest that the 1.7-hectare site was mainly a ceremonial and administrative center, with little evidence for agricultural processing. Bethel, also furnished with a 3-meter-wide wall and supplementary rampart, did provide evidence for domestic habitation.¹⁸²

Tell er-Rumeida (Hebron), in the southern central hills, was fortified with a massive stone wall, within which parts of several houses have been excavated. One of these rooms contained numerous mammal remains, along with a bucolic Akkadian cuneiform tablet that enumerates the apparent transfer of heads of sheep, perhaps for sacrifice. Women tax (?) collectors are mentioned, as well as, possibly, a king.¹⁸³

Faust has commented on the considerable variability of the excavated village sites, attempting to distinguish “independent” from “owned” villages, the inhabitants of the latter serving in effect as tenant-farmers for absentee or resident landlords.¹⁸⁴ Among the independents, villages may be more communal or more house-oriented. Nahal Refa'im would belong to the latter, as the “most independent” type, whereas Manahat, in Faust's view, would be communal, though one could see Manahat as “owned” by the occupant of the large central structure. Whatever their status, the primary fact is the coevolution of village and walled town throughout the central highlands; this contrasts with the region of Hazor, where the massive expansion of the city created a virtual vacuum of village settlement in its immediate vicinity, and with the environs of Kabri, where the small sites show a trajectory different from that of the center. Highland villages and walled entities may be said to have grown together as mutually supporting and integrated economic systems, and to have declined together, suggesting that (1) highland settlement and urbanization was more heterarchical than lowland urbanization, which crystallized around large, dominant institutions, and (2) the MB system underwent true collapse, more rapid and more clearly marked than that which is commonly attributed to the EB III.

Towns of the Southwest Coast and Plains

Judging by developments in the gate area of Ashqelon, the transition to MB II marked a diminution of this site's preeminence on the southern Levantine coast. In its final phase, the gate itself was reduced to a small, four-piered entrance; tombs were constructed along the ramp leading to the gate, obstructing passage; and a small shrine was built there as well (see below). Concurrently, new sites rose to prominence, in an urban and material florescence that recalls the late EB surge in the same region. It has long been assumed that the Fifteenth Dynasty of Egypt, based in its eastern delta capital of Avaris, maintained a special relationship with southwest Canaan. Relying on a single Egyptian text that mentions a three-year campaign against the retreating Hyksos kings at “Sharuhén,” on later Egyptian records of the fourteenth to

tenth centuries BCE, and on the unique mention of a Sharuhén in a much later biblical text, archaeologists have long sought the Hyksos “home base” in southern Palestine, identifying it either at southern Tell el-Far‘ah, Tell el-‘Ajjul, Tel Haror or even Tell el-Sharia.¹⁸⁵ Oren has gone so far as to posit a “Kingdom of Sharuhén,” allied to the Hyksos dynasty and serving as “its main Asiatic power base and reserve of manpower for its wars in Egypt.”¹⁸⁶ The archaeological picture is, however, far less categorical. Much of what has been said about the political status of southwest Canaan relies on the discoveries at Tell ed-Dab‘a and on facile projections from the evolution of that site to the Levant. It is therefore worth repeating that what has been revealed at Tell ed-Dab‘a is the gradual emergence of an *Egyptian* dynastic center in the delta, which, while manifesting clear signs of profound ethnic and cultural entanglement with the Levant, developed its own cultural assemblage while maintaining significant economic and political interactions with upper Egypt.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the Asiatic/Levantine component of Dab‘a, both early and late in its MBA sequence, points to much stronger relations with northern Levant than with southern Levant. This can be seen in the Mediterranean and north Levantine orientation of the physical imports to that site and in the absence of evidence for an active land route across the northern Sinai coast.¹⁸⁸ It is best, therefore, to resist the temptation to lump the sites of the southwestern Levant with those of the eastern delta, and to view them – and the elements of Egyptian culture adopted in the Levant – on their own terms.

Tell el-‘Ajjul. Tell el-‘Ajjul, on the north bank of Wadi Ghazzeḥ, about 1.5 kilometers from the sea, is undoubtedly the crowning jewel of the southwest coast. Like most of the towns in the southwest cluster, it was founded *de novo*, and its form is largely artificial, apparently patterned on the “ideal” rectilinear form of the early second millennium. A considerable portion of the site was rapidly excavated by W.M.F. Petrie in 1930–1934 and by Mackay and Murray in 1938, and ever since that time, scholars have tried to put the plethora of house plans, tombs and rich inventories of finds into a semblance of order (Figure 5.23).¹⁸⁹

It seems clear that MB I occupation on the mound was limited, being represented mainly by burials in the northeast quadrant of the mound, in the so-called Courtyard cemetery (including a “warrior” burial accompanied by a donkey interment). The MB II occupation spread across most or all of the 11-hectare mound and consisted of a dense urban agglomeration that manifests signs of public planning. The site was lightly protected, by MBA standards, with a wide dry moat and a glacis or low rampart. Herzog reconstructs two approach ramps to the site that interrupt the moat on the east and west sides of the mound (Figure 5.23).¹⁹⁰ In his reconstruction, based on a collation of plans published in the five volumes of the Petrie expedition, the MBA town plan shows parallel bands of contiguous houses separated by broad streets running between the two entrances to the town, subdivided into house blocks by



Figure 5.23 Composite plans of Tell el-Ajjul (left) and Tell el-Najila (right). After Herzog 1997: figs. 4.9, 4.21 (by permission).

narrower transverse alleys. The northeast quadrant was dominated by a large complex (“palace”), consisting of rows of rooms arranged around a large courtyard. Several MB II tombs were excavated on the outer northeast slope, including loculus tombs featuring the central interment of one or more equid (horse?) skeletons¹⁹¹ surrounded by niches with human remains. If Herzog’s reconstruction is accepted, the town plan was clearly oriented toward accessibility, rather than defense, and is something of an aberration in the fortified MBA landscape. Moreover, the wealth of finds in the town, the prominence of imported objects and the international orientation of its prolific artisans all point to a special role of Tell el-‘Ajjul as entrepôt and trade gateway.

It is clear, especially in view of the soundings excavated in 1999–2000,¹⁹² that both Petrie’s and Herzog’s plans are simplifications of a settlement history that spanned the MB II and LB I periods. Petrie identified two main building phases, separated by a conflagration. It is generally assumed that the earlier stratum is to be attributed to MB II. It is said to be marked by the presence of Cypriot ceramic imports, including Red on Black, Proto-Base Ring and White Painted IV–VI wares¹⁹³ as well as great quantities of locally produced scarabs and some Fifteenth Dynasty imports. Large quantities of gold jewelry found in burials and in hoards – including many unique pieces that may be attributed to a local workshop – have been attributed by Negbi (1970) to the sixteenth to fifteenth centuries, for the most part.¹⁹⁴ Stewart and Ziffer,

however, have pointed to earlier parallels in Egypt and Ebla for several of the 'Ajjul workshop products, including exquisite granulated bird and crescent-shaped earrings and several cloisonné gazelle-head pendants.¹⁹⁵ Thus, a continuous tradition of fine metalworking can be attributed to phases both predating and postdating the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Tell el-'Ajjul has been promoted in recent years as the site of "Sharuhén," besieged and taken by Ahmose, the first ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Its strong Egyptian associations have been extrapolated as evidence for its function as a Hyksos "power base" in Asia.¹⁹⁶ While the identification with Sharuhén remains possible, there is, in fact, no compelling reason to identify the site as a Hyksos stronghold. Rather, the presence of Egyptian and Cypriot ceramics, as well as the emulation of Egyptian and Hyksos style and practice in the prolific Canaanite scarab workshops, should be attributed to the strong commercial orientation of 'Ajjul throughout its existence as a town. The site was without doubt an important node in the coastal trade that began in Middle Kingdom times and continued to be maintained by the Hyksos dynasty at Avaris.

Tell Haror (Tell Abu Hureyra). At 16.2 hectares, Tel Haror is one of the larger sites in the southwest region. Located on the north bank of Wadi esh-Sharia' (Nahal Gerar), it lies just within the dry-farming belt of the northwestern Negev. Surrounded by a massive rampart based on natural kurkar formations and a fosse, dated to the late MB II, the site consists of a small upper mound and a low enclosure. Excavations were focused on the fortifications and on a temple complex identified in the southwest corner of the lower town.¹⁹⁷ A well was sunk to groundwater on the slope above the wadi-bed that runs along the southern flank of the site, but it was later filled with refuse that appears to be related to ceremonial feasts. Little is known about the extent and density of settlement within the enclosure.

The massive, but badly damaged, brick temple (about 10 × 15 meters) and its surrounding courtyards and subsidiary structures provide what is by far the most detailed portrait of a functioning urban cult center of the late MBA. The building appears to have been destroyed in an earthquake (as witness the collapsed east tower of the temple, discovered in situ in the court, and massive collapse layers in the subsidiary structures) and subsequently formally sealed. The following description of the principal finds in the temple complex is based on the detailed studies of Klenck, Katz and Nahshoni.¹⁹⁸

The temple itself follows the classic Syrian form, with a southeast-facing portico – flanked by massive antae and approached by three stone steps – leading to a cella, badly damaged by late intrusions, that contained a large central hearth. Finds in this space were sparse, suggesting that access to this space was limited and that it was kept free of refuse during its use and at abandonment. As is the rule in the formal MBA Levantine temples, no icon or specific deity can be associated with the Haror temple complex.

The broad court surrounding the temple on at least three sides was gradually populated with auxiliary installations and rooms that showed heavy cultic use. The placement of the auxiliary structures at an oblique angle to the main structure suggests a divergence in the cultic impetus underlying these adjacent units – a divergence, or duality, that can be traced in the finds as well. The installations associated with the main structure include a rectangular altar placed in front of the main temple, at the right edge of the front steps, and a larger square altar in the eastern courtyard, accompanied by a large refuse pit. Finds on and around the altars and in the large pit testify to sacrificial activities, including the slaughtering and subsequent offering or consumption of large mammals – sheep, goats, cattle, gazelle and deer. Ceramic finds in these areas included great quantities of cooking pots, kraters, bowls, goblets, juglets, cylindrical stands and many miniature votive vessels, all of which indicate the performance of formal feasting and ritual libation/drinking.

Auxiliary structures built in the second phase were attached to a massive temenos wall bordering the court on the northwest. They included a small chamber with freestanding benches, a large space subdivided into several units that occupied the entire eastern wing of the courtyard, and – on the far side of the wall – a circular installation containing periodic ritual deposits. The bench room and the eastern auxiliary rooms contained evidence for intensive ritual activity, as well as for storage and control of foodstuffs and curation of exotic artifacts. Associated with this phase were numerous small pits dug in the eastern court, with remains of offerings, consisting principally of ritually slaughtered birds (crows and ravens) and puppies. Similar remains were found in the auxiliary rooms, whereas the circular subterranean installation on the north side of the temenos wall contained the remains of ritually sacrificed donkeys, including the complete skeleton of an immature donkey furnished with a copper bit and a saddle, of which the bronze omega-shaped fittings have survived.¹⁹⁹ While the donkey interments appear to be related to high-status activity, recalling the equids interred in “warrior tombs,” the sacrifice of crows and puppies appears to be connected to more accessible forms of worship and ritual that might be associated with healing or divination. Vessels and faunal remains of ritual feasting and drinking are associated with the auxiliary structures as well.

Setting aside the sheer quantity of finds, unmatched at any other temple site in the Levant, the composition of the ritual assemblage is familiar, being comprised of stands, goblets, kraters and bowls with applied snakes and quadrupeds, snail-like decorations, ram’s-heads and vegetal motifs. Much of the pottery is painted (in contrast to the bulk of the late MB II repertoire). Votives include hundreds of miniature bowls, small perforated columns of unbaked clay, anthropomorphic figurines and shrine models. Several exotic objects stand out, including an imported vessel carrying a Minoan-style graffito, an imitation Minoan krater and the fragments of an anthropomorphic

head-cup, of a type associated with ceremonial consumption of beverages.²⁰⁰ But the most important contribution of the Haror complex is the rich harvest of evidence concerning the sensorial aspects of MBA ritual practice. The Early and Intermediate Bronze Age cultic contexts were, it may be recalled, materially and sensorially austere, so much so that we have questioned whether they were in regular, or perhaps only occasional, use. The formal MBA cult structures – the various *in antis* and tower structures – were also light on physical evidence for ritual practice, while the open-air installations, like that at Hazor, seemed to be busier. The Haror assemblage allows us finally to populate the temple – and particularly its courtyard and outbuildings – with a vibrant, noisy, noisome throng of priests and supplicants, burning altars and incense stands, cooking corners and refuse pits, and, above all, with the din of sheep, donkeys, puppies and fowl being brought to the slaughter.

Tell Najila (Tel Nagila). With its markedly artificial rectangular outline and its raised rampart and bowl-like interior, Tell Najila is a typical MB II creation (although an earlier, unfortified EBA settlement existed at the site). Limited excavations revealed a few sections of its fortifications and a sizable part of the town center.²⁰¹ The bowl-like contours of the site are a result of the construction of a massive retaining wall along the inner rim of the rampart (which is itself fronted by a fosse). Bonded to the wall was a massive tower near the northwest angle of the site, which must have protruded well above the rampart. The houses excavated in the center of the town seem to consist of double rows bordered by streets that appeared to have been laid out orthogonally, in a manner reminiscent of Tell el-‘Ajjul. The plan is somewhat obscured by the constant renovation and rearticulation of the houses, suggesting that the town grid was negotiated, rather than imposed. Thus, a large courtyard surrounded by small housing units in the earliest phase is bisected by a street in the second phase, as house plots appear to have become more standardized. Finds in the houses – as at almost every other MBA site – illustrate a wide range of household activities, including food processing and consumption, weaving, and livestock-keeping. Groups of miniature vessels found in specific rooms, some of them bearing children’s finger impressions, have been interpreted as children’s toys, underlining the domestic character of the buildings at the very center of the mound.

Other sites of the Wadi Ghazzah and Wadi esh-Sharia‘ drainage include Tell el-Far‘ah (South), Tell Jemmeh and Tell esh-Sharia‘. All we can say regarding Tell el-Far‘ah is that the 6-hectare site, built on a natural hill, was protected by rampart and fosse fortifications and a six-piered gate founded in MB II.²⁰² Tell el-Jemmeh, which may have originally extended over an area of 5 hectares, was also founded in MB II. Limited excavations suggest the presence of a low rampart and several phases of occupation. A neonate equid burial (foundation deposit) is reported from the site, as well as a zoomorphic Tell el-Yahudiya vessel and a group of seals bearing impressions of scarabs of Egyptian and local

manufacture.²⁰³ At Tell esh-Sharia' (Tel Sera), remains of elite structures and houses were excavated on the 2-hectare mound. They appear to straddle the MBA–LBA divide, similar to Tell el-‘Ajjul.²⁰⁴

The two coastal sites of Ashqelon and Ashdod might also be included in the southwest plains group. At Ashqelon, as noted above, the monumental gate complex was much reduced in MB II to a simple, four-piered pedestrian passageway. Moreover, the approach to the gate area from the sea was now blocked by a modest, freestanding courtyard (or central hall) structure and four built tombs. The courtyard building yielded domestic remains, for the most part, but in one of its rooms a beehive-shaped ceramic model shrine was found, containing a small silver-plated bronze figurine of a bull calf. The brick- and stone-lined tombs extend right across the former gate ramp. Two unrobbed tombs contained the remains of adults and children and seem each to have served as family tombs. Inside the rampart precincts, little evidence for MB II occupation has been found, but a cemetery was located and excavated in Grid 50, south of the “South Tell,” on the western edge of the site.²⁰⁵

Three strata (XXIII–XXI) are attributed to the MB II at Tel Ashdod and constitute the earliest urban settlement on the 8-hectare mound.²⁰⁶ Focused on the gate area, they uncovered meager remains of a rampart and a four-piered gate in the earliest phase, soon superseded by meager building remains associated with the latest phase of MB II.

The florescence of settlement in the southern coastal plain begins in MB II and is marked by the wholesale establishment of new sites, often characterized by their clearly artificial outline, a product of their earthen ramparts. These sites stand alone, for the most part; that is, they are not integrated with a halo of village settlements, as seen in the highlands or as postulated for MB I Ashqelon. Presumably, their natural or artificial prominence allowed them to dominate a sufficiently large expanse for their own subsistence in the open landscape of the southern coastal region. There are, however, modal differences between the sites that might allow us to view them as complementing each other. ‘Ajjul is obviously trade- and industry-oriented, by virtue of both its location and its open, lightly defended layout. Najila resembles ‘Ajjul in its residential focus, but is more stoutly defended and appears to have concentrated on the basics of staple wealth (agriculture and animal husbandry), rather than on the prestige goods so prominent at ‘Ajjul. In contrast to both sites, Haror seems to serve as a regional ritual center – an element lacking at the other excavated sites. The well-defended center at Far‘ah had an important extramural cemetery. Viewing the region as a geographical unit, the picture emerges of a loosely bonded heterarchical system, where a degree of balance and reciprocity can be maintained between the different communities through economic complementarity, a convergence of interests and a high degree of cultural homogeneity. This falls short of the “state system” or “Hyksos kingdom” envisioned by Oren and others, yet it provides a rationale both for the surge of southwest

coastal plain settlement in late MB II and for continued Egyptian interest in the area at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age: the region had prospered through its own productivity and its openness to international contacts – including contacts with Hyksos Egypt – in Fifteenth Dynasty times, and could still serve Egyptian interests after the establishment of the New Kingdom in the early part of the sixteenth century BCE.

THE NATURE OF MB II LEVANTINE POLITIES

A pattern emerges from the four regional networks described above: in MB II, as in MB I, heads of centralized polities successfully recruited agro-pastoral allies or dependents to contribute toward large building projects and the provision of goods to palatial, military and ceremonial centers. There were, however, several different paths taken to achieve these ends. The largest sites – perhaps only Hazor falls into this category – became themselves great centers of population; that is, the productive element was brought into the city, which became the focal point of multiple economic functions and of social power. Through the construction of ramparts and water reservoirs the city was transformed into a mountain with a valley spring, appropriating and artificially enhancing the two most important natural advantages that define successful site location. By building palaces and temples, the city cemented its role both as *axis mundi* – the mediator between lower and upper worlds – and as the seat of political power. By the construction of numerous gates the city declared itself open for business, and by allotting space for domestic construction it invited people to become part of the urban fabric. Burials appear to have been confined to the city, beneath house floors, perhaps indicating an absence of connection between the people of Hazor and the cemeteries of prior regional populations.

Elsewhere, power seems to have been distributed, rather than concentrated. At Kabri and the highland strongholds like Shiloh and Jerusalem, leading families established palatial structures, appropriated natural resources, encouraged the development of crafts and industries, or established themselves as mediators of divine power, but their towns remained undeveloped as centers of population, agricultural production or trade. These functions were provided by surrounding village communities that show varying degrees of autonomy. The installation of a massive tower temple in late MB II in some of the towns seems to have been a major ingredient in the maintenance of regional dominance. Thus, in addition to – and possibly in emulation of – Hazor, tower temples were erected at Kamid el-Loz, Megiddo and Pella (as well as at Shechem and Haror, which were described above). At Kamid el-Loz, ancient Kumidi, in the Lebanese Bīqā' valley, a sprawling, multiroomed structure, characterized as a palace, dominates the fortified town, while a brick tower temple was identified about 60 meters to its north.²⁰⁷ The main hall of the

temple is a massive brick structure, about 12×12 meters in external dimensions, with 2-meter-thick walls. Its broadroom hall (with internal dimensions of 7×9.7 meters) was approached from the east by way of a porch and doorway flanked by two towers. A row of small stelae stood to the left of the entrance. Adjoining the hall were several auxiliary chambers, typically lined with benches topped by shallow receptacles set in square bricks (an arrangement unique to this site). At Pella, the modest brick structures of the early MB were replaced by a massive stone long-room structure, 16×22 meters, with projecting piers. A “repository,” located a short distance away from the temple, contained plaster-lined libation pits, some linked together by ceramic pipes, miniature ceramic vessels and fine stone vessels, including one with handles in the form of ram’s heads.²⁰⁸ At Megiddo, the small cult room and stelae field of the MB I was replaced, probably late in MB II, by the massive, northward-facing 4×25 meter tower temple, 2048.²⁰⁹ A variation on the theme of regional cult center is the “High Place” at Gezer. Here, in a large, uninhabited space in the middle of the fortified town, stood a row of ten very large aniconic stelae, associated with a massive square stone basin. The most recent consideration of this installation suggests that the stelae commemorated a covenant renewal ceremony among ten towns or tribes, that would, based on fragmentary finds associated with it, have involved communal feasting.²¹⁰ The temple complex at Tel Haror, as shown above, may have functioned as a ritual center within a larger heterarchical system that included other centers of economic or political power.

Other towns developed their identity as centers of residence, commerce and craft. These include sites like Tell el-Ajjul and Tel Nagila, described above, or Jericho, Tell Beit Mirsim and Lachish. At Jericho, the small EBA site was nearly doubled in MB II by the construction of new city wall, rampart and massive revetment that most likely brought the spring of ‘Ain as-Sultan within the town limits. A residential quarter excavated by Garstang and Kenyon on the hill above the spring revealed two cobbled and stepped streets leading up the hill from the fortified area toward a possible palace. The houses flanking these streets had two stories, the lower story serving for storage and perhaps commerce, the upper story for habitation and crafts, including weaving and, in one residence, flour-milling on a commercial scale. Finds in the Jericho cemetery testify to the presence of skilled cabinet-makers and bone-carvers at the site.²¹¹ At Tell Beit Mirsim, the MB II saw the further development of planned settlement, with a belt of houses abutting the town wall bounded by a street furnished with stone drains, and with a double row of houses, bordered by another street, parallel to the first. In the latest phase, Stratum D, a large “patrician” house is imposed upon part of the earlier plan, taking the place of four earlier houses. Lachish was massively fortified with a glacis and moat or fosse, partly cut into the rock; and parts of what appears to be a palace, characterized by thick walls, plastered floors and cedar beams, were excavated on its summit.²¹²

Foucault-Forest²¹³ describes the lineaments of the typical Canaanite domestic quarter, as seen in residential towns such as Tell el-‘Ajjul, Jericho and Tel Beit Mirsim or in towns that combine residential and non-residential functions such as Megiddo. Streets were laid out concentrically and radially, with important buildings typically located near the perimeter. Although there were no public squares as such, walled compounds belonging to temples and palaces could be set aside for communal ceremonies. The typical arrangement of houses in rows resulted in their tendency to take similar form and dimensions. The fundamental house plan was tripartite, with a central hall and smaller chambers on each side. Rooms could be added, but the presence of a central family room that would allow gatherings and reception of guests was mandatory. Houses were relatively spacious and often stood two stories high. Towns were dense, leaving little space for artisanal occupations or for absorbing external populations. Rebuilding town walls and extending habitation zones would have been corporate undertakings, so that destruction and reconstruction might be due as much to local initiative as to outside acts.

Despite their considerable achievements in architecture, crafts and administration, MB II polities were not as stable as one might imagine. The florescence of at least three of the four regional systems described above – Hazor, Kabri and Jerusalem – occurred chiefly in the eighteenth century BCE, and while Hazor and the southern coastal towns prospered well into the seventeenth century, Kabri and the highland polities were already in decline. Viewing the *longue durée* of second-millennium population centers, and perhaps contrary to expectation,²¹⁴ the integrated village–town systems, whose decision-making was not centralized and where various actors had the autonomy to adapt their strategy to global changes, were not the key to long-term resilience. Rather, it is the coastal towns with access to sea trade and inland centers with temples that show the most staying power, even after losing their village tributaries. As we shall see in Chapter 6, this might have hinged on the adoption by elites of an interregional network strategy, allowing them to sustain their small populations by retaining control of the ritual terrain and by investing effort in wealth, rather than staple, economies.

MARGINAL AREAS

The accordion-like dynamics of marginal area settlement are never more starkly in evidence than in the third- to second-millennium transition. To date, no sites in the arid or even semiarid zones framing the Levant can be ascribed to the MBA, nor is there any evidence for the exploitation of desert resources, such as copper in the ‘Arabah Valley or exotica from the Red Sea shore. Four sites situated at the border of the arid zones are instructive in this respect.

Tel Masos (Kh. el-Mshash) and Tel Malhata, in the eastern Negev, are small fortified sites, about 1–1.5 hectares in size, on the south bank of the seasonal Wadi as-Saba' (Beersheba). Remnants of an MB II rampart fortification were excavated at Tel Masos, along with a few well-built structures inside the site, described by Singer as a single-period occupation.²¹⁵ The rampart is built in typical MBA fashion, with fosse, revetment and inner retaining wall, and enclosed several wells. At Malhata, three phases of construction, the last of them dated to late MB II, were discovered on the inner slope of the earthen rampart.²¹⁶ The density of settlement at both sites, which are situated well within the “zone of uncertainty” at the southernmost extremity of the dry-farming zone, is unclear, but the ceramics are of standard issue. At Malhata, excavators reported the existence of an unfortified contemporary settlement on the opposite north bank of the wadi, leading them to suggest that the fortified site played a role in a regional system.

Tell er-Rukeis, in northern Jordan,²¹⁷ should be seen as the southernmost site in the Hauran group that extends northward toward Damascus, and includes the large, fortified sites of Sharaya and Bosra. McLaren states emphatically that Rukeis is within the dry-farming zone and is not to be viewed as a desert site (the purported MBA fortress or inn identified by Helms at more easterly Jawa remains questionable, in the absence of datable finds associated with the structure). Like the eastern Negev sites, Rukeis is small, but exhibits features – a boulder-built wall and a two-entry gate protected by towers that do not extend beyond the wall line – that are recognizably MB in character, if somewhat provincial. Here too, little can be said about the interior of the site.

The site that comes closest to representing arid-zone settlement is Zahrat adh-Dhra', east of the Dead Sea.²¹⁸ Here, along a ridge bisected by a downcutting wadi channel, more than twenty independent structures were identified. Several structures, characterized as stone-lined pit houses, were sampled in different parts of the site. Each structure consisted of one or two rooms, to which a fenced area was attached. The pottery, spanning the mid-MB I to mid-MB II, suggests that the site grew slowly and cumulatively, and most likely was not settled across its entire extent at any given time. Although no artifactual evidence (e.g., sickle blades or ground-stone processors) for crop processing is presented, the botanic assemblage was diverse, including barley, wheat, legumes, fig and grape. Animal bones were not abundant. The ceramic assemblage consisted mainly of cookware and storage jars, the latter being heavily curated (many of them characterized by mending holes). Although Berelov posits year-round settlement at the site, a targeted, seasonal occupation, exploiting pasturage or specific agricultural niches, seems more likely. A nearby, contemporary cave and tumulus cemetery at Dayr 'Ayn Abata has produced pottery contemporary with Zahrat adh-Dhra', remarkable for its quantity and quality.²¹⁹

Despite its simplicity and seeming lack of integration into settled-zone patterns, Zahrat adh-Dhra' hardly represents a traditional pastoral settlement: neither its faunal remains nor its artifact repertoire – composed almost entirely of standard, wheelmade pottery – resemble earlier Timnian settlement, while the botanic assemblage clearly indicates the importation of familiar, settled-region foodstuffs to the site. Neither does the possible relation to the nearby cairn burials indicate desert pastoralism, since the use and reuse of tumulus tombs in the MBA are well attested in the northern regions.²²⁰ If it was seasonally occupied, as suggested above, it might have been a pastoral outpost of a settled-region system centered in the southern plateau.

The absence of settlement in the semi-arid and arid margins may be understood as the flip-side of the unusually dense fabric of settlement in the dry-farming regions, from the northern Negev to the Hauran and Biqua'. As has been proposed for other urbanizing periods, we must assume that the concentration of large sites and intense economic exchange in the highlands, valleys and coastal regions attracted not only sedentists but pastoral groups too, tending to the large flocks needed to provide wool and meat to the town-dwelling population. In this manner, urban areas and associated hinterlands pulled in the former IBA inhabitants of the marginal regions, while trading with distant partners for materials formerly acquired locally.

MORTUARY LANDSCAPES: THE DEAD IN THE CITY AND CITIES OF THE DEAD

As has been noted in the preceding review, the dead appear to take on an increasingly prominent role in some MB II sites, perhaps as an expression of the general rise in the standard of living and a growing urbanized class of artisans and merchants. Excavated cemeteries number in the hundreds, some with up to a hundred caves and more than a thousand burials, to which many hundreds of jar-burials, usually of infants, should be added. Burial sites fall into three main categories: cemeteries located away from urban or village settlements, often – but not always – on the site of old IBA burial grounds; cemeteries adjacent to urban or village sites, also characterized by the reuse of IBA caves; and intrasite burials, which become increasingly elaborate at some sites (e.g., Kabri, Megiddo), while remaining as simple subfloor interments at others. These seem to represent three broad categories of commemoration, territorial attachment and ancestral identity: (1) Unattached cemeteries appear to mark territorial attachments that either precede MBA settlement or relate to shared land resources of non-urban groups. (2) Attached, extramural cemeteries, which often overlook the fields and other immediate resources of the site, suggest a sense of continuity with the people who had formerly inhabited the site and its environs and a link to the surrounding countryside. (3) Intramural burials are the “odd man out”: they are house-oriented,

highlighting the continuity of life in specific structures and bringing the dead into intimate proximity with the living. Within each of these categories, however, there are shared features that are illustrative of a broader shift, as the MBA progressed, in the relations between the living and the dead.

The Rishon Le-Zion Cemetery, where upward of 200 graves and shaft-tombs have been excavated, represents a crucial link between MB I and MB II burial practice, illustrating elements of continuity and change. About 175 pit-graves appear to represent the earlier phase of use in the cemetery, beginning in MB I and probably carrying over into MB II. Most of these were single-interment primary burials, a good number of which contained weapons – veined daggers and notched axes. The later phase burials were multiple-interment shaft and chamber tombs, often used over several phases, separated by layers of clay.²²¹ In the later tombs, weapons were far less prominent, giving way to a richer array of ceramic vessels, scarabs and other prestige items. While all interments were originally primary, in these later tombs, many exhibit a phenomenon typical of most MB II cemeteries: earlier skeletal remains were informally piled together to provide space for new primary interments. The striking fact about this large cemetery, said to have contained as many as a thousand burials, is its distance from any of the major sites of the period. If the existence of “siteless” early MB I cemeteries in the Jordan Valley (e.g., Rehov, Bet Shean), Jezreel Valley (e.g., Hazorea) or the coastal plain (Barqai), or similar late MB I cemeteries in the hills (Gibeon, ‘Ain Samiya, Dhahr Mirzbaneh), could be viewed as a form of territorial inscription intended to preserve – or demonstrate – a connection with IBA traditions, how may we interpret the persistence of an autonomous cemetery in the heartland of MB I–II urbanizing settlement on the coastal strip? Halotte²²² has suggested that cemeteries of this type, especially in the middle coastal strip,²²³ could represent various types of territorial negotiation within the network of villages and towns. Another aspect to keep in mind is the persistence of non-urban identities right through the Middle Bronze Age as a counterpoint to the increasing institutionalization of town life (primary shaft-tomb burials had been the norm in the nearby Yarkon basin in the IBA).²²⁴ Whoever it was that used this burial ground, the shift from communal to kin-based identity is noticeable, in conformity with urban practice.

Most MB II burials are found within the built-up sites or in their immediate environs. Extramural cemeteries at Megiddo, Jericho, Lachish, Tel Bet Mirsim or Tell el-Far’ah South often utilized or expanded IBA burial grounds.²²⁵ But instead of the single burials characterizing the earlier period, the tombs contained multigenerational primary burials, presumably of extended families. For the most part, these were sequential primary interments, each accompanied by ceramic vessels, cuts of meat, and occasional personal adornments, typically including toggle pins used to fasten the deceased’s garment and scarabs, either suspended on a necklace or set in a ring. In these tombs, the introduction of

new burials led to the indiscriminate mounding, and occasional rifling, of earlier remains. At Jericho, however, several tombs contained what appeared to be simultaneous burials of entire families, consisting of undisturbed primary interments of up to twelve individuals, including many children. The spacious tombs at Jericho, which were almost always reused IBA tombs, preserved the most elaborate tomb furniture of any known cemetery. It included, in addition to supplies of food in jars and platters, wooden beds, stools and tables; wooden bowls; and wooden boxes decorated with bone inlays.

In her study of the intramural shaft-tombs of MB II Ashqelon, which may have been placed in an uninhabited part of the enclosure, Baker attempted to identify a minimal “burial kit” for sequential primary burials in collective tombs.²²⁶ Bowls, containing cuts of meat, and juglets, presumably containing perfumes and oils, were predominant. Fastening pins and scarabs were the sole personal objects interred with the dead. The late MB II interments were marked by the presence of imported Cypriot White Painted IV–VI juglets and great number of scarabs, which appear to have become an obligatory component of the burial kit in southern Canaan.

Typically, intramural burials in the densely built-up MB II towns are either stone-built chamber tombs associated with dwellings or jar-burials, mainly of infants, interred beneath houses or along the edges of the settlement, in the fortification zone. Chamber-tomb T.498 at Kabri provides a graphic illustration of the intimacy created between the living and the dead (Figure 5.24).²²⁷ The tomb was part of a domestic and artisanal compound, occupied over several generations (and which, in fact, contained two smaller built tombs, several cist graves, and infant jar-burials). The entrance to the tomb lay just to the left of the entrance to the compound itself, so that all the people living or working in the compound saw it and sensed it every day. The tomb itself was



Figure 5.24 Tomb 498 at Kabri, top view (left) and final disposition of finds near the doorway (right). Courtesy of N. Scheftelowitz.

entered, for successive interments, at least twenty times, before it was sealed, and in each successive interment, the shaft had to be cleared and the contents of the dark tomb chamber, revealed in the flickering light of lamps found discarded in the shaft, rearranged. Because each interment was a primary burial, and because each was accompanied by foodstuffs – liquids and cuts of meat – each reentry involved contact, presumably by family members, with the decomposing corpses, decaying foodstuffs and other organic materials of the earlier burials, and with the array of accompanying objects. Even if these occasions were spaced over several years, there can be no doubt that they left a powerful sensory impression on all the inhabitants of the household, and that the dead, in these settings, were closer and more integrated into the world of the living than at any time since the Neolithic. In this sense, the MBA represents a striking departure from previous practice: instead of separate, peaceful villages of the dead, or even the somewhat more restless cities of the dead beyond the walls, the noisome ancestors of MB II town-dwellers were decidedly present and available for commemoration and intercession.

Hallote has suggested that the commemoration of ancestors in intramural and extramural collective burials was a form of domestic piety that preceded the construction of communal or institutional temples at urban sites. But as we have seen, ancestor cults and centralized temple rituals were maintained side-by-side in the MBA Levant, though perhaps with some tension between them; their relative significance at different sites is thus a social, rather than a chronological, fact. Viewed in this way, it may be recalled that the practice of intramural burial was largely limited to royalty and elite personages in third-millennium Syria (e.g., at Tell Banat and Umm el-Marra), becoming widespread throughout the Levant and Mesopotamia in the second millennium BCE.²²⁸ The royal hypogeum at Qatna, preserved as it was left on the last day of use in the early fifteenth century BCE, offers insight into the importance and the components of commemorative rites and practices of the Syrian elite, enacted at a grand scale. These practices included a gradual descent from the space of the living, through a corridor and anteroom, to the space of the dead, elaborately staged commemorative rituals that involved the arrangement of objects in the tomb and the consumption of liquids and solids in the burial crypts, and rites of passage for the bodies of the interred, culminating in their dismemberment and reinterment, with their ancestors, in collective ossuaries, along with burial gifts that testified to the wealth of the interred and their intercourse with distant rulers and kingdoms.²²⁹ Scaled down to the level of local elites, or even non-elite town dwellers,²³⁰ intramural burial in the Levant can be shown to share the concepts of presence in the compass of the living city, liminal spaces (the burial shafts, which often provide evidence for rites of passage and closure), the presentation and handling of the dead and of the burial accoutrements (the careful placement of gifts and belongings with the last primary burials), and the absorption of the recently departed with their

ancestors (the “mounded” bone piles). Over the course of MB II, these practices were extended to extramural burial caves, as seen, for example, at Jericho.

Middle Bronze Age Crafts

In addition to the unique and exquisite gold weapons, vessels and jewelry of Byblos and Tell el-‘Ajjul, and the ceramic art of Tell el-Yahudiya and “eggshell” ware producers, the MB II is a high-water mark for several branches of Canaanite craft.

Wood. Our knowledge of south Levantine woodcraft is confined to the single known assemblage, remarkably well preserved in the tombs of Jericho (Figure 5.25).²³¹ Due to peculiar anaerobic conditions, dessicated remains of wooden bowls, boxes, cosmetic containers and instruments, tables, stools and a bed have been preserved (along with textiles, hair, fruit, and animal and human flesh). Tables were the most common furniture type. They consisted of a single plank, sometimes framed, and had three legs – two on one short end and one in the middle of the opposite end – probably designed for stability on the uneven house floors. Their legs were often elaborately carved to resemble animal legs or plants,

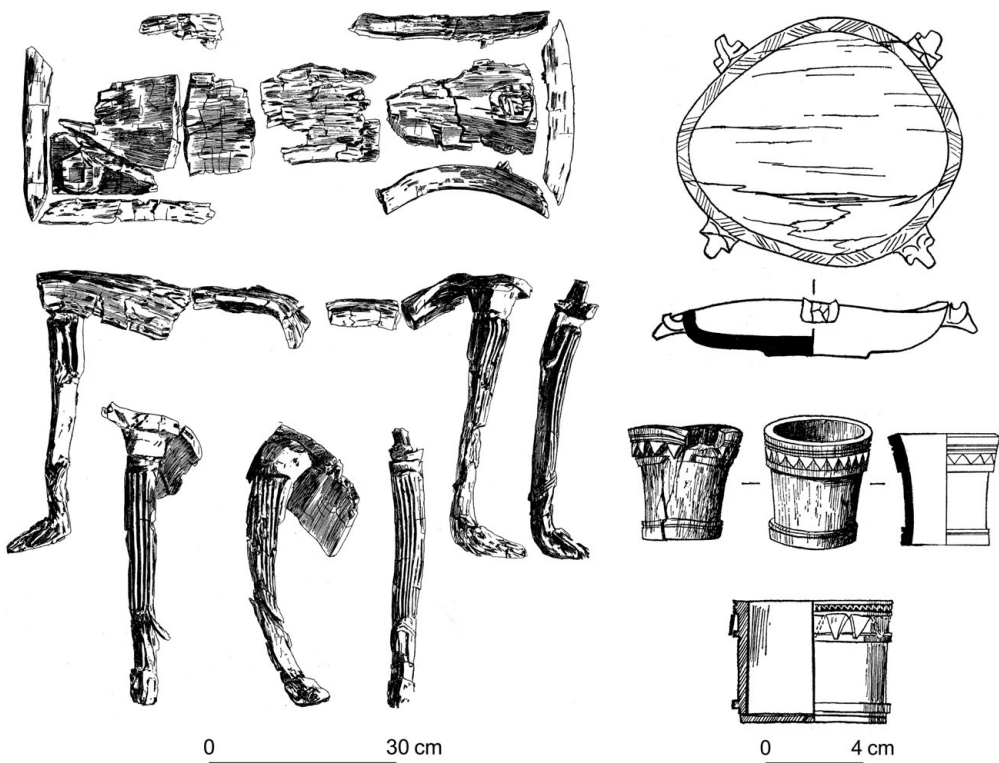


Figure 5.25 Wooden objects from MB II tombs at Jericho: a three-legged table (left), a bowl and two decorated boxes. After Kenyon 1965: figs. 172; 202. Reproduced by the permission of the Council for British Research in the Levant, London.



Figure 5.26 MB II bone inlays from Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell el-Ajjul and el-Jisr. Photos by C. Amit. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

and one table had a central, rounded depression, as if to accommodate a bowl. Frames and legs were all joined with mortises and tenons. The delicate stools and the bed had perforated frames to accommodate the wicker seats or mattress.

Many tombs contained wooden bowls and large shallow platters with hooked or ram's-head handles, resembling ceramic bowls of the same type. There were also cylindrical or tear-shaped cosmetic containers with delicately carved geometric designs, as well as numerous wooden combs with carved handles. Several oblong boxes, joined with pegs, were found, along with the bone inlays that decorated them (see below). Cartwright's study of the woods used by the carpenters of Jericho reveals careful and judicious choices made in obtaining and employing fifteen local hardwood varieties (from Mediterranean and riverine environments) and three softwood species, including Lebanese cedarwood, in the carved weight-bearing components, in the broad table tops, in the vessels and in the many decorative features (veneers and inlays) that compose the assemblage.

Bone Inlays (Figure 5.26). Strips of decorated bone, as well as bone cutouts, are among the most typical products of MB II craftsmen in the southern Levant.²³² They were affixed to wooden boxes, as found at Jericho, either by means of pegs or with an adhesive (e.g., bitumen). The strips typically bear incised geometric patterns, although a few have figurative scenes, whereas the cutouts take the shape of human, bird and quadruped figures, *djed* pillars and other hieroglyphic signs.

Cylinder Seals (Figure 5.27). Cylinder seals are not common in the southern Levant, and most are Syrian or Babylonian objects that found their way westward as ornaments or status markers. One group of cylinder seals – the “green jasper” group – is considered local to the Levantine coast, and has been attributed to a single workshop in Byblos or to several workshops, in Byblos and further south, perhaps in Megiddo.²³³ The seals in this group are characterized by their style and



Figure 5.27 Locally produced MB II scarabs from Barqai and Tell el-Ajjul, and a hematite cylinder seal (“green jasper” type) from Tell Beit Mirsim. Photos by C. Amit and M. Sucholowski. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

raw material (usually a green hard stone, and sometimes gray hematite), and particularly by the fusion that they show between Syrian and Egyptian elements, including both hieroglyphic and cuneiform inscriptions. In this sense, they represent a distinct central Levantine form of cultural hybridization that serves as a counterpoint to the mass-produced south Levantine scarabs described below.

Scarabs. Introduced in the Eleventh Dynasty, the scarab comes into its own as the preferred glyptic medium in Middle Kingdom Egypt, and soon makes its way to the Eastern Mediterranean basin and the MBA Levant. Daphna Ben-Tor has defined four groups of MBA scarabs, each of them representing significant conditions and relations of production, use and distribution.²³⁴ Scarabs made in Middle Kingdom Egypt (Twelfth and early Thirteenth Dynasties) often served as administrative devices, used to seal doors, containers and documents in Egypt and Lower Nubia. Their content, however, was largely apotropaic in its intent, with a broad and repetitive repertoire of signs and geometric, floral and figurative designs that all form variants of the basic concept represented by the scarab beetle itself – the regeneration of life, its fecundity and its timeless cycle. A smaller group of personalized seals, carrying royal names or those of high officials, was once thought to have been intended for official use, but these too were doubtless used as personalized burial amulets. Middle Kingdom scarabs of both types found their way to the Levant in Middle Kingdom and later times. Significantly, the Montet jar at Byblos, as well as several other MB I scarab groups on the Lebanese coast (e.g., from the tombs at Sidon), belong to the Egyptian Middle Kingdom group, as

do the scarabs presented to the rulers of Byblos, in which they are designated with the Egyptian term for “governor.”

With the dissolution of the Middle Kingdom and the rise of the Fifteenth (“Hyksos”) Dynasty in Egypt, two sources of scarab production are in evidence: the Hyksos capital at Tell ed-Dab’a continued to produce scarabs, some bearing royal names, that were distributed in Egypt and occasionally in the Levant, but were no longer used administratively. Concomitantly, new centers of scarab design and production were established in Canaan, distributing their products widely along the coast and into Egypt as well. The scarabs in Canaan (Figure 5.27), which Ben-Tor has divided into an earlier and later group, served almost exclusively as an apotropaic device during life and particularly at death. People wore scarabs in necklaces or set in rings and were very often interred with scarabs, as is fitting in view of their embodiment of the concept of rebirth. In addition, jar handles and other ceramic objects were occasionally stamped with scarab seals. The practice of stamping pots prior to firing was an Early Bronze Age innovation in the Levant that could only have had a symbolic or communicative, rather than administrative, purpose. It is a curious fact that this practice spans disparate periods and cultures in the Levant, all the way down to the end of the first millennium BCE.

The designs on south Levantine scarabs of the early group, found, for example, in the Rishon Le-Zion cemetery, are primarily renditions of Egyptian prototypes, focused on a restricted set of signs and symbols that connote divine protection and blessing, and are used in ways that would be viewed as “incorrect” by Egyptian artists. The late group displays an even greater degree of Egypto-Levantine entanglement, with depictions of Levantine rulers, lions, horned animals and nude goddesses partly inspired by north Levantine glyptic art, as displayed, for example, in the green jasper group mentioned above. In this context, the absence of Egyptian Second Intermediate Period scarabs in the northern Levant is noteworthy, suggesting that ties between the Fifteenth Dynasty and the Levant were mediated chiefly by the ports and towns of southern Canaan.

THE WANING OF THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

The rules of engagement staked out in Chapter 1 of this volume require that archaeological periodizations and transitions be pegged to local Levantine trajectories. This approach may serve us well in the definition of the MB–LB transition, which has been beset with tangential concerns, primarily those linking Levantine developments with Egyptian chronology. Although it is tempting to tether the Levantine sequence to the Egyptian dynastic succession, or to the moment when the Levant was annexed to the aggressively expanding empire, the archaeology of the Late Bronze Age shows that the Egyptian presence in the Levant was superimposed on a pre-existing local political structure, and that its cultural effect was pronounced, but structurally limited. Considered on its own merits, therefore, the end of the MBA must be placed

at the culmination of the trajectory begun in MB I, that is, at the dissolution of the integrated systems composed of fortified centers and their rural satellites.

Throughout the Southern Levant, from the Biqua' to the Transjordanian plateau and from the Lebanese coast to the southwestern plains, the transition from MB to LB is marked by destructions or stratigraphic discontinuities on the large mounds and by the temporary or permanent abandonment of smaller sites, signaling the collapse of entire regional systems. Thanks to several ceramic markers, the end point of these changes can be established to within decades of 1600 BCE. But the process of collapse may have begun as much as one century earlier. At Tel Kabri, radiocarbon dates put the destruction of the palatial estate slightly after 1700 BCE,²³⁵ though settlement might have survived for a few decades more, based on some late pottery types (e.g., black lustrous juglets) found in one of the tombs excavated by Kempinski. A similar progression might be seen at Lachish, where the ruined stratum P4 palace is inherited by squatters, still within the MB II period, and possibly Jerusalem, where we do not seem to have terminal MBA assemblages in the town site or in the contemporaneous villages, but an extramural tomb on the Mount of Olives is used continuously into the LB II.²³⁶

Key to the transition are southern coastal sites with late MB to early LB stratified assemblages, such as Tell el-'Ajjul or Tel Mor,²³⁷ and recently published sequences in the north, e.g., Bet Shean, Yoqne'am or Abu al-Kharaz.²³⁸ These provide controlled contexts straddling the divide, which is characterized by stratigraphic discontinuity and by technological and typological changes in local ceramic industries. Late MB pottery at these sites is marked by the continued production of local fine wares and wheelmade cooking pots, and by the introduction of two new fine wares, one a specialized production of the northern Jordan Valley or the southern Biqua', Chocolate-on-White ware, found mainly in the Jordan Valley, and the other an import from Cyprus – Wheelmade Bichrome ware, found mainly along the coast (see Chapter 6, Figure 6.2). Chocolate-on-White is characterized, in its MBA phase, by a fine ceramic fabric and by the careful execution of its motifs, painted in chocolate-brown on a creamy white burnished slip. The shapes are those of the local MBA – carinated bowls, goblets, kraters, jugs and jars – and a stylistic genealogy for the decorative style can be shown with earlier Monochrome Painted Cream and Levantine Painted wares of the Levantine interior.²³⁹ Cypriot Wheelmade Bichrome ware was produced for a brief span, during the Late Cypriot I, and first imported to the Levant in the late MBA and early LB I.²⁴⁰ Its eye-catching red and black decoration, comprising geometric and animal motifs applied to tankards, jugs and kraters, was taken up in the Levant, inspiring a local style that became a hallmark of the LBA.

These two products, which have been found together – albeit rarely – at coastal and inland sites, can be synchronized with the main marker for Eastern Mediterranean mid-second millennium chronology – the Santorini/Thera

volcanic eruption. Bichrome Wheelmade appears in Cyprus and the Aegean in the LC IA1, in contexts that predate the eruption on Thera, now dated to approximately 1600 BCE (see Chapter 6). In the southern Levant, Cypriot Bichrome and Jordan Valley Chocolate-on-White appear together in late MB contexts (e.g., at Hazor and at 'Ajjul), along with a few other early LC IA imports (at 'Ajjul), such as Proto-White Slip, Monochrome and Proto-Base-Ring.²⁴¹ In the recent excavations at 'Ajjul, Cypriot Bichrome was found in strata that predate the earliest occurrence of Thera pumice, which began to wash up on Levantine shores soon after the eruption.²⁴² It is, therefore, likely that the late MB II occurrences of Chocolate-on-White and Cypriot Bichrome are to be placed a decade or two before or after 1600 BCE, and that the continuation of LC IA imports in LB I places the beginning of that period in the first half of the sixteenth century.

With these ceramic guide fossils in hand (the imported and local fine wares and the accompanying wheelmade cooking-pot types), and in view of significant changes in ceramic technology at the beginning of the LBA, the ceramic markers for surveys are relatively clear, so that it can be safely stated that the massive drop-off in village settlement occurs no later than the end of the MB and possibly earlier, in some parts of the country (if there had been large-scale sixteenth-century settlement, we would be seeing more of the late MB/early LB types in surveys).

The MB-LB transition must therefore be labelled a collapse. This collapse has long been obscured by the ceramic continuities and by the assumption that the settlement crisis was somehow linked to the fortunes of the Fifteenth ("Hyksos") Dynasty, but this Gordian knot must be cut, since it is increasingly clear that (1) the crisis began in the seventeenth century, before the expulsion of the Hyksos; (2) the Hyksos are not a south Levantine phenomenon; and (3) commonplace claims for ceramic continuity between late MB II and LB I are misleading, because the transition is marked by technological discontinuity, which will be enlarged upon in Chapter 6, as well as a shift in imports, which might be more significant than the continuities (in a sense, we have seen similar discontinuities in the third millennium, both in the EB I-II and EB III-IB transitions, where there is no strong "cultural" change, despite stark changes in other parameters).

Although this collapse has often been recognized,²⁴³ it has never been satisfactorily explained. Because its modalities resemble those of the EB II collapse (demise of village system, survival of central sites, loss of centralized ceramic industries), it is tempting to offer a similar structural explanation, couched in terms of institutional failure. But there are many differences between these two cases: the MBA systems had a long history of relative stability, whereas those of the EB II began to fray almost as soon as they were set in place; the MBA systems were regionally flexible, allowing different power-sharing arrangements, whereas those of the EB II appear ideologically

rigid; and MBA communities were relatively isolated and self-reliant, while MBA communities had a long tradition of connectivity. If we look at the EB III, however, a salient characteristic of Levantine urbanism, shared across different epochs and contingent circumstances (the MBA included), does stand out: the web of mutual obligations between the ruling strata, town-dwellers and villagers that allowed the former to maintain the physical institutions of urban power (fortifications, water systems and palaces) as corporate enterprises, and provided the latter with physical protection, economic security, identity and a sense of common purpose. Given the fundamental insecurities of Levantine existence, the failure of specific places, like the Kabri palace, should never come as a surprise. The accumulation of such failures, however, points to a more significant, global change – one that encouraged the abandonment of the MBA social contract in favor of a new, wealth-based paradigm that marks a new epoch – the Late Bronze Age. The nature of these global changes, and of the new social contract, will be examined in Chapter 6.

NOTES

- 1 Oren 1997.
- 2 E.g., Weinstein 1981; Dever 1985; 1987.
- 3 Hoffmeier 1989; 2004.
- 4 Bienkowski 1989; Mazar and Mullins 2007.
- 5 Albright 1928; Maisler (Mazar) 1954; and see Cohen 2002.
- 6 E.g., Kenyon 1971; 1973; Dever 1976.
- 7 Yadin 1978.
- 8 Mazar 1964.
- 9 Bietak 1991; Oren 1997.
- 10 Weinstein 1975; Dever 1987; Falconer and Savage 1995.
- 11 Bunimovitz 1992a; Finkelstein 1992.
- 12 Ilan 1995.
- 13 Mediterranean: Broodbank 2013; Yasur-Landau et al. 2015; Amorite: Burke 2017; Egyptian: Cohen 2002; 2016.
- 14 E.g., Bietak 1991; 2002b.
- 15 E.g., Hagoshrim: Covello-Paran 1996; Gesher: Garfinkel and Cohen 2007; cf. Kennedy 2016.
- 16 E.g., Tell el-Ifshar: Marcus, Porath and Paley 2008; Tell el-Hayyat: Falconer and Fall 2006.
- 17 Cohen 2016; Höflmayer, Kamlah, Sader et al. 2016; Höflmayer, Yasur-Landau, Cline et al. 2016; Höflmayer 2017a.
- 18 Bronk Ramsey et al. 2010; for the historical uncertainties in this sequence, see Hornung, Krauss and Warburton 2006. It is yet to be determined how the newly revised calibration curve (Pearson et al. 2018) will affect the MBA radiocarbon chronology.

- 19 Manning et al. 2014; Ritner and Moeller 2014.
- 20 Rosen 2007: 143–144; see also Maher, Banning and Chazan 2011.
- 21 Finkelstein and Langgut 2014, possibly supported by Kaniewski et al. 2017; but see Finné et al. 2011, which suggests a reverse trend.
- 22 Riehl 2017.
- 23 Knapp and Manning 2016.
- 24 Friedrich et al. 2006; Manning et al. 2006; 2014.
- 25 E.g., LaMoreaux 1995; Pyle 1997, Friedrich 2013.
- 26 Tammuz 2001.
- 27 Lichtheim 1975; Ritner 1993; 1997; Marcus 2007; Allen 2008.
- 28 Flammini 2010.
- 29 Mazar 1964; Posener 1971; Redford 1992; and see review in Cohen 2002.
- 30 Ritner 1993.
- 31 A. Ben-Tor 2006.
- 32 Baines 1982.
- 33 For additional references and representations of Asia in Egypt, see Cohen 2002.
- 34 Kenyon 1973; Schwartz 2013; Burke 2014; 2017.
- 35 Porter 2012.
- 36 Schwartz 2013: 7.
- 37 Tapper 1990.
- 38 Fleming 2004.
- 39 Schwartz 2013; Burke 2017.
- 40 Dossin 1973; Tammuz 2001.
- 41 Marfoe 1998.
- 42 Ibrahim, Sauer and Yassine 1976; Greenberg 2002; Maeir 2010: 131–141.
- 43 Frankel et al. 2001; Greenberg 2002.
- 44 Yasur-Landau, Cline and Pierce 2008.
- 45 Thalmann 2006; Charaf 2014.
- 46 Broshi and Gophna 1986; see also Gophna and Portugali 1988.
- 47 Gorzalczany 2005; Levy 2005; 2008; Kletter 2006; Peilstöcker 2008.
- 48 Finkelstein 1994; Ofer 1994; Falconer 2001; Gonen 2001.
- 49 Braemer 1993; Eames 2003; Braemer et al. 2009; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 319.
- 50 Oren 1980.
- 51 Garfinkel and Cohen 2007.
- 52 Wengrow 2010b.
- 53 Oren 1973; Yogev 1985; Covello-Paran 1996.
- 54 Epstein 1985.
- 55 Ory 1937; Kempinski 2002; Peilstöcker and Sklar-Parnes 2005; 2008; Thalmann 2010; Kletter and Levi 2016.
- 56 Hallote 2001.
- 57 Magness-Gardiner and Falconer 1994; Falconer and Fall 2006.

- 58 Insoll 2011.
- 59 Castel 2010.
- 60 Eisenberg 1993b.
- 61 Bourke 2012.
- 62 Greenberg and Eisenberg 2006.
- 63 Cf. Nigro 2002.
- 64 Zevulun 1990; Aston and Bietak 2012.
- 65 Greenberg et al. 1998.
- 66 But see Kletter and Levi 2016, who would limit “warrior” status only to those with the full complement of weapons.
- 67 Forstner-Müller 2002.
- 68 Schiestl 2002.
- 69 Keel 1993.
- 70 Philip 1989; 1995; 2006.
- 71 Ziffer 1990; Beck 2002c.
- 72 Seeden 1980.
- 73 Treherne 1995.
- 74 Philip 1989; Ilan 1995.
- 75 Kenyon 1960: 306–314.
- 76 Marcus 2007: 171–173 posits a delay in the resumption of Byblite trade with Egypt.
- 77 Montet 1928; Tufnell and Ward 1966; Flammini 2010.
- 78 Negbi 1976; Seeden 1980.
- 79 E.g., Seeden 1980: pls. 126: 8, 130: 22–3.
- 80 Brody 1998: 45.
- 81 Nigro 2003a (including a stone mold for fenestrated axes in the “Smith’s Tomb”); Yasur-Landau 2014.
- 82 Wengrow 2010b: 156–157.
- 83 E.g., Seeden 1980: pl. 121.
- 84 Tufnell and Ward 1966.
- 85 Larsen 1987.
- 86 Bagh 2004; D. Ben-Tor 2007; Wengrow 2010b.
- 87 Philip 1988; Ilan 1992; Earle and Kristiansen 2010; cf. Godelier 1999.
- 88 Ben-Dor 1950; Dothan 1956a, b.
- 89 Stern 1984.
- 90 Paley and Porath 1997; Marcus, Porath and Paley 2008.
- 91 Kochavi, Beck and Yadin 2000; Kochavi and Yadin 2002; Gadot and Yadin 2009.
- 92 Thalmann 2002.
- 93 Bagh 2004; Doumet-Serhal 2004.
- 94 Kletter and Gorzalczany 2001.
- 95 E.g., those at Ramat Aviv and Nahal Sorek; Singer-Avitz and Levy 1992.
- 96 Burke 2008.

- 97 E.g., Stager, Schloen and Master 2008: 232.
- 98 E.g., Yadin 1963; Kempinski 1992b; Burke 2008.
- 99 E.g., Bunimovitz 1992b; Finkelstein 1992; Herzog 1997.
- 100 Burke 2008: 152.
- 101 Kochavi, Beck and Yadin 2000; Gadot and Yadin 2009.
- 102 Ory 1937.
- 103 Bagh 2002; Kochavi and Yadin 2002.
- 104 Such as neighboring Kh. Sha'ira: Peilstöcker 2004.
- 105 Burke 2008: 125–140, 237–243; Stager, Schloen and Master 2008.
- 106 Stager, Schloen and Master 2008: 105–130.
- 107 Maeir 2002; Stager Schloen and Master 2008: 227–231.
- 108 D. Master, personal communication.
- 109 Raban and Tur-Caspa 2008.
- 110 Fleming 2004; Lyonnet 2009.
- 111 Morandi Bonacossi 2014.
- 112 Morandi Bonacossi 2014: 284.
- 113 Kochavi, Beck and Gophna 1979; Golani 2011.
- 114 Burke 2008: 315–316.
- 115 Be'eri 2008.
- 116 Biran 1994; 1996; Greenberg 2002.
- 117 Biran 1984.
- 118 Bourke, Sparks and Schroder 2006.
- 119 Kempinski 1989; Burke 2008.
- 120 Albright 1938.
- 121 Yasur-Landau 2012.
- 122 Kamlah and Sader 2010; Sader and Kamlah 2010; Badrashany and Kamlah 2013.
- 123 Gophna and Ayalon 1982.
- 124 Ben-Tor, Bonfil and Zuckerman 2003.
- 125 Artzy 1995; Forstner-Müller and Kopetzky 2009; D. Ben-Tor 2011.
- 126 Artzy 1995; Merrillees 2003.
- 127 Marcus, Porath and Paley 2008.
- 128 Stager et al. 2008; Höflmayer, Kamlah, Sader et al. 2016.
- 129 Maguire 1990; 2009.
- 130 Even-Zohar 2010.
- 131 Darnell 2013.
- 132 E.g., Gardiner 1916; Albright 1948; 1966; Sass 1988; 2005; Hamilton 2006.
- 133 Goldwasser 2006; 2011; 2012; 2017; see, however, reservations in Darnell 2013.
- 134 Horden and Purcell 2000: 54–88.
- 135 Greenberg and Keinan 2009.
- 136 Marfoe 1998.
- 137 Raban 1999.

- 138 Falconer 2001; McLaren 2003.
- 139 Helms 1989; Braemer 1993; Braemer et al. 2009.
- 140 Gophna and Portugali 1988.
- 141 Where some rooms of a palace have been identified as well; Ussishkin 2004a.
- 142 Doumet-Serhal and Shahud 2013.
- 143 Bonfil 1992.
- 144 E.g., Kenyon 1960: 402; Brandl 1993: 223–227; Weksler-Bdolah and Gershuny 2004; Ben-Tor, Ben-Ami and Livneh 2005: 39.
- 145 Gershuny and Eisenberg 2005.
- 146 Zevulun and Ziffer 2007.
- 147 Maeir 1997; Dunayevsky and Kempinski 1990; Covello-Paran 2007.
- 148 Yadin 1972.
- 149 Zuckerman 2012.
- 150 Yadin 1972: 42, 53.
- 151 Yadin 1972: 42–44, 97.
- 152 Ben-Tor 2013; Weinblatt-Krauz 2013; Ben-Tor et al. 2017.
- 153 Marom, Lev-Tov and Kehati 2017.
- 154 Ilan 1996.
- 155 Cf. Braemer and al-Maqdissi 2002 for south Syrian ceramic parallels.
- 156 Horowitz 2013.
- 157 Hazor 5: 1–8; Horowitz and Oshima 2006: 71.
- 158 Horowitz and Wassermann 2004.
- 159 Kempinski 2002; Yasur-Landau et al. 2012; Yasur-Landau, Cline and Goshen 2014; Höflmayer et al. 2016.
- 160 Kempinski 1992a.
- 161 Koh, Yasur-Landau and Cline 2014.
- 162 Kempinski 2002; Yasur-Landau 2011.
- 163 Koh, Yasur-Landau and Cline 2014; Yasur-Landau et al. 2015.
- 164 Yasur-Landau, Cline and Pierce 2008.
- 165 E.g., the Naqar Ridge fort (Mezad En Tamir): Getzov 2000.
- 166 Steiner 2001; Shiloh 1984; Reich and Shukron 2004; 2010; De Groot and Bernick-Greenberg 2012.
- 167 Prag 1991.
- 168 Saller 1964.
- 169 Reich and Shukron 2004; 2010.
- 170 Regev et al. 2016.
- 171 Boas-Vedder 2001.
- 172 Clifford 1972.
- 173 Eisenberg 1993a, b.
- 174 Horwitz 1989.
- 175 Edelstein, Milevski and Aurant 1998.
- 176 Milevski, Greenhut and Agha 2010.

- 177 Ein-Mor 2011.
- 178 Magen, Batz and Shapira 2008.
- 179 Meitlis 1991; Weksler-Bdolah 1999.
- 180 Wright 1964; Herzog 1997: 141–143; Campbell and Wright 2002.
- 181 Finkelstein, Bunimovitz and Lederman 1993.
- 182 Kelso 1968.
- 183 Ofer 1993; Anbar and Na’aman 1986–1987.
- 184 Faust 2005.
- 185 Far ‘ah: Albright 1932: 53; Aharoni 1979; ‘Ajjul: Kempinski 1974; Haror: Rainey 1993; Sharia’: Conder and Kitchener 1883: 392.
- 186 Oren 1997.
- 187 Kopetzky 2008; Moeller, Marouard and Ayers 2011.
- 188 Imports: Cohen-Weinberger and Goren 2004; Kopetzky 2008; Knapp and Demesticha 2017; land route: Oren 1980; Hoffmeier 2006.
- 189 Principally, Albright 1938; Negbi 1970; Kempinski 1974; Stewart 1974; Tufnell 1993; Foucault-Forest 1996; Herzog 1997; Sparks 2005 and Fischer and Sadeq 2000; 2002, who excavated at the site in 1999–2000.
- 190 Herzog 1997: fig. 4.9.
- 191 Wapnish 1997.
- 192 Fischer and Sadeq 2000, 2002; Fischer 2004; 2009.
- 193 Stewart 1974.
- 194 Negbi 1970.
- 195 Stewart 1974; Ziffer 1990; Matthiae 1997.
- 196 Oren 1997.
- 197 Oren 1993; 1997; Nahshoni 2015.
- 198 Klenck 2002; Katz 2013; Nahshoni 2015; see also Brandl 2013; Brandl, Oren and Nahshoni 2014.
- 199 Bar-Oz et al. 2013.
- 200 Zevulun and Ziffer 2007.
- 201 Amiran and Eitan 1993; Uziel and Lewis 2013.
- 202 Burke 2008.
- 203 Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014: figs. 3.63, 3.64.
- 204 Oren 1993.
- 205 Baker 2006; Stager, Schloen and Master 2008 .
- 206 Dothan and Porath 1993.
- 207 Metzger 2012; Heinz 2013.
- 208 Bourke 2012.
- 209 Epstein 1965.
- 210 Dever 2014a: 53.
- 211 Garstang 1934; Kenyon 1971; Ziffer 1990.
- 212 Herzog 1997: 144–149; Ussishkin 2004a.
- 213 Foucault-Forest 1996.
- 214 E.g., Ur 2010.

- 215 Singer 1983.
216 Beit-Arieh and Freud 2015.
217 McLaren 2003; 2004.
218 Berelov 2006a, b.
219 Politis 2012.
220 E.g., Meyer 1967; 1974.
221 Levy 2008; Kletter and Levi 2016.
222 Halotte 1995.
223 E.g., in the greater Tel Aviv area: Halotte 1995: fig. 5; Kaplan 1955; Leibovitch 1955.
224 Meyer (1967; 1974) reports the discovery of MB I and II collective tumulus burials near Gal'ed, on the southeastern flank of the Carmel range. Epstein (1985) notes MB I–II reuse of IBA dolmens in the Golan.
225 Garstang 1932; Guy 1938; Tufnell 1958; Kenyon 1960; 1965; Price-Williams 1977; Ben-Arieh 2004; Singer-Avitz 2004a.
226 Baker 2006.
227 Kempinski 2002: 51–53.
228 Pfälzner 2014.
229 Pfälzner 2011; 2014; Rossberger 2014.
230 Morandi Bonacossi 2011; Yasur-Landau 2011; Laneri 2014; Wygnanska 2014.
231 Kenyon 1960; 1965; Ziffer 1990; Cartwright 2005.
232 Liebowitz 1977; Ziffer 1990.
233 Collon 1986; 2001; Keel 1995; Teissier 1996.
234 D. Ben-Tor 2007; 2009; 2011.
235 Höflmayer, Yasur-Landau, Cline et al. 2016.
236 Saller 1964; Singer-Avitz 2004a; Ussishkin 2004a.
237 Barako 2007; Fischer 2009.
238 Fischer 2004; Ben-Tor, Ben-Ami and Livneh 2005; Mazar and Mullins 2007.
239 Ilan 1996; Fischer 1999.
240 Artzy, Perelman and Asaro 1978; Artzy 2001; 2002.
241 Bergoffen 2002; Manning 2002.
242 Fischer 2009.
243 Bunimovitz 1992a; Na'aman 1994a; Ilan 1995 and many others.

CHAPTER 6

THE LATE BRONZE AGE: UNDER EGYPT'S HEEL

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the integrated MBA town–village system in the late seventeenth and early sixteenth centuries BCE ushered in a brief transitional phase that marks one of the archaeological low points of the Levantine Bronze Age. Emerging at the far end of this transition was a new settlement configuration in which the surviving towns, exhibiting palatial and ritual centralization, dominated little islands of cultivation in a poorly developed countryside, leaving the intervening regions to non-integrated sectors of society that are nearly invisible in archaeological terms (Figure 6.1). This was the Late Bronze Age terrain that served as a backdrop for the expansion of Egyptian imperial involvement in Western Asia and for increasingly interconnected regional networks, the two themes to which the bulk of this chapter will be devoted.

Archaeological descriptions of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) southern Levant are often integrated in a broader regional view for which abundant historical documentation exists, including the royal archives and inscriptions of Hittite and Egyptian kings, archives of lesser centers such as Alalakh and Ugarit, and scores of isolated cuneiform and other inscriptions from sites across the Levant. Likewise, the Levant is often subsumed in grand narratives of the Mediterranean, which stress maritime connectivity and the mingling of people and cultures along the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard. Without prejudice to these perspectives, I will try to show how the greater trends are played out at the local level, and where the material evidence might correct or contradict entrenched narratives based on textual representations. The ready availability of texts seems to encourage intellectual shortcuts in Levantine archaeology, leading to fuzzy or hybridized concepts (e.g., “a Nineteenth Dynasty stratum,” “Amarna Age pottery”) and black boxes (e.g., “Levantine city-states”) that require careful dismantling. It also carries the dangers of facile translation: the automatic cultural associations that we might attach to concepts such as “frontier” “land,” “city,” or actions such as “destroyed” or “lost,” without



Figure 6.1 Map of sites mentioned in this chapter.

considering the tortuous journey that they have made, through ancient and modern languages, value systems and historical contingencies, before arriving on our plate. This chapter, therefore, by design, is an unembellished archaeological portrait that may be complemented or contradicted by historical portraits of the same chronological and geographic expanse.¹

Chronology and Phasing

Unhitching the archaeological chronology from the Egyptian Dynastic one at both the beginning and the end of the LBA, as defined here, allows us to retain the traditional taxonomy while diverging somewhat from its standard formulations. The period begins, therefore, with three archaeological phenomena – the disintegration of the MBA village system, stratigraphic discontinuities at continuously occupied sites and the resultant shift in local ceramic industries and technologies – all of which may be correlated with Mediterranean radiocarbon chronology² and placed at approximately 1600 BCE (see also below). The stages that follow are poorly differentiated, in terms of internal chronology, and are traditionally linked to the Egyptian dynastic succession, rather than to local radiometric sequences or material culture. Thus, various changes in the Levantine ceramic assemblage (including the introduction of locally made Egyptian-type pottery) might be linked to the intensive military activity of Thutmose III, marking the beginning of LB IB around the middle of the fifteenth century BCE, whereas the bulk of the fourteenth century – termed LB IIA – is considered equivalent to the “Amarna Age,” that is, the reigns of Amenhotep III, Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and Tutankhamun, as represented in the material culture and royal archives of Akhenaten’s capital at Tell el-Amarna. In cultural terms, LB IIA might best be characterized as the high-water mark of sea-based trade along the south Levantine coast, especially with Cyprus, which in turn might be considered as a by-product of late Eighteenth Dynasty *laissez-faire* imperial policy and the intense interaction between Eastern Mediterranean polities. Both underwent significant change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (the Ramesside period), entailing, again, changes in both settlement and material culture in the Levantine LB IIB. It is here that the relatively convenient correlation between political history and archaeology ceases. Archaeologically, Late Bronze IIB material culture, sans Cypriot and Aegean imports, survives throughout the twelfth century BCE and into the eleventh century, at some sites. At others, a gap in settlement is recorded, whereas new sites are established mainly in the highlands. The latter are characterized by what might be termed an impoverished LB II material culture assemblage and are generally attributed to “Iron Age I,” in view of a teleology that assigns them a formative role in the first-millennium polities of Israel and Judah. Likewise, the late twelfth-century entanglement of Canaanite and Aegean cultural expression has been widely viewed as evidence for the settlement of LBA “Sea Peoples,”

later grouped together under the rubric of Philistines. It may therefore be argued that, in the guise of “remnant Cannanites” in the valleys, of “Israelites” in the hills and of “Philistines” on the coast, the Late Bronze Age should be extended to the end of the second millennium BCE, absorbing most – if not all – of the Iron Age I. Of course, such a view would be staunchly contested by proponents of the traditional nomenclature and, moreover, would require expanding the purview of this volume well beyond the intent of the editors. I have therefore adopted the term “Transitional Bronze–Iron Age” (TBI)³ for the last part of the Late Bronze Age, to cover, at the very least, those sites that continue to maintain a Late Bronze identity until the cusp of the eleventh century BCE and even beyond, and will comment briefly on the option of annexing both “Philistines” and “Proto-Israelites” to the Bronze Age.

Climate

The most recent reviews of second-millennium climatic trends do not identify, with any degree of certainty, overriding climatic considerations that would have a determining effect on LBA settlement in the southern Levant.⁴ Recent attempts to pinpoint climate degradation in the palynological record notwithstanding,⁵ the chronological resolution on climate is poor, and there is little agreement on what it is that we are looking for, in climatic terms: Changes at the start of the LBA? Reasons for the movement of peoples and the collapse of polities in the late thirteenth century, or in the mid-twelfth century? An explanation for the revival of settlement in the southern plains or the highlands in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries? Clearly, a single climatic explanation for all of these changes cannot be forthcoming, while local-scale environmental changes affecting particular parts of the landscape can be studied only on a site-by-site basis. Thus here, as in previous chapters, climate will be left out of the discussion, not because it did not change (it almost certainly did fluctuate), but because no specific climatic shift can be attached to recorded archaeological phenomena. It therefore joins the long list of “known unknowns” with which archaeologists must contend.

PROLEGOMENON: THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY (LATE BRONZE IA)

Several recent, detailed stratigraphic reports cast new light on the MB–LB transition in the sixteenth century BCE. These can be correlated with the latest series of radiocarbon refinements for the corresponding period in Egypt and the Aegean to provide a secure – although not universally approved – chronological framework for this century. An important chronological anchor for the transition is the volcanic eruption of Thera, which serves as a benchmark in the Aegean and, by extrapolation, in all areas that can be tied to it. The

publications of Manning et al., summarized in 2014, establish a date c. 1620 BCE for the eruption.⁶ It should be stressed that the narrow window of time suggested for the eruption is based on Bayesian modeling of disparate radiocarbon measurements that can all be ascribed, on stratigraphic grounds, to this singular event. This makes this dating, which has been hotly contested, the most convincing – but certainly not the only – rationalization of the data collected so far. While the accuracy of the current radiocarbon dating receives strong support from the very high degree of correlation achieved between similarly modeled radiocarbon dates and the historical dynastic chronologies of Egypt, which have a long history of constant refinement and harmonization,⁷ additional work on the radiocarbon calibration curve may require constant revision even of broadly accepted dates.⁸

By dating the Thera eruption to c. 1600, two important correlations are established. First, Late Cypriot IA imports associated with pre-eruption deposits on the island of Thera allow for the Late Cypriot IA imports in the late MBA Levant, for example, at Tell el-‘Ajjul, to be dated as early as the late seventeenth century. Second, Thera pumice discovered in securely dated archaeological contexts in the Levant alongside Late Cypriot IA ceramics can establish a *terminus post quem* – the earliest possible date – for those strata. Continuity in Late Cypriot I ceramic imports between successive strata in Levantine sites can thus help identify the phase immediately preceding as well as that following the Thera eruption.

Numerous attempts have been made to refine the muddled chrono-stratigraphic sequence produced by the summary excavations and publications of Tell el-‘Ajjul.⁹ Clearly, for the purposes of any refined observation regarding the nature of the transition, the old excavations must be admitted useless (and the same holds true for Megiddo, Beit Mirsim and other excavations of that vintage). They do, however, inform us that robust trade relations had been established between ‘Ajjul and Cyprus in the late MB, and continued unabated into the LB I. The site also shows strong Egyptian affinities, e.g., in its gold- and silversmithing traditions, which span the MB–LB divide (see Chapter 5). With regard to Cypriot ceramic imports, Oren and Bergoffen seem to agree that the Proto-White Slip bowls found in the Levant precede the White Slip I bowls in time, and hence could – on the strength of the Thera find – be ascribed to the late seventeenth century.¹⁰ Therefore, quantities of Proto-White Slip and White Slip I at ‘Ajjul probably bridge the seventeenth and early sixteenth centuries BCE, as does the presence of Monochrome bowls and Cypriot Wheelmade Bichrome pottery. This observation is upheld by the results of limited stratigraphic excavations pursued by P. Fischer and M. Sadeq at Tell el-‘Ajjul in 1999–2000.¹¹ Eight stratigraphic horizons were identified in these excavations, apparently covering the three main strata presented by Petrie (and illustrating the loss of detail in the earlier excavations). Fischer has conveniently provided quantifications for the imported wares and the

Theran pumice encountered in the excavations, showing that pumice is first introduced at phase H5, in the middle of his sequence. Cypriot Bichrome and Monochrome imports span the phases both before and after H5, while White Slip I and II, as well as Base-Ring I and II, are introduced in or after H5. Chocolate-on-White ware from the Jordan Valley first appears in H5, while in the local pottery, a significant shift in cooking wares is reported, with the typical bulbous-rim MBA cooking pot replaced by a simple, everted-rim pot, with a plain or bluntly triangular edge, that presages the everted folded triangular rim of the LB proper (Figure 6.2).¹²

Fischer's work on the MB-LB transition at Tell Abu al-Kharaz, in the Jordan Valley, adds an inland perspective (although the excavation shows uncertain correlations between widely separated excavation areas). At Tell Abu al-Kharaz, Fischer succeeds in demonstrating a continuous rise, floruit, and decline of the Chocolate-on-White style, which is clearly a product of the Levantine MBA tradition.¹³ In its early stages, the style represents an elaboration of the local tradition, used on eggshell-quality bowls and chalices, as well as jugs, juglets and kraters. A bichrome variant also appears at the cusp of the sixteenth century. In the course of LB I, three successive styles are identified by Fischer, CW I, CW II and CW III, each representing a decline in both the

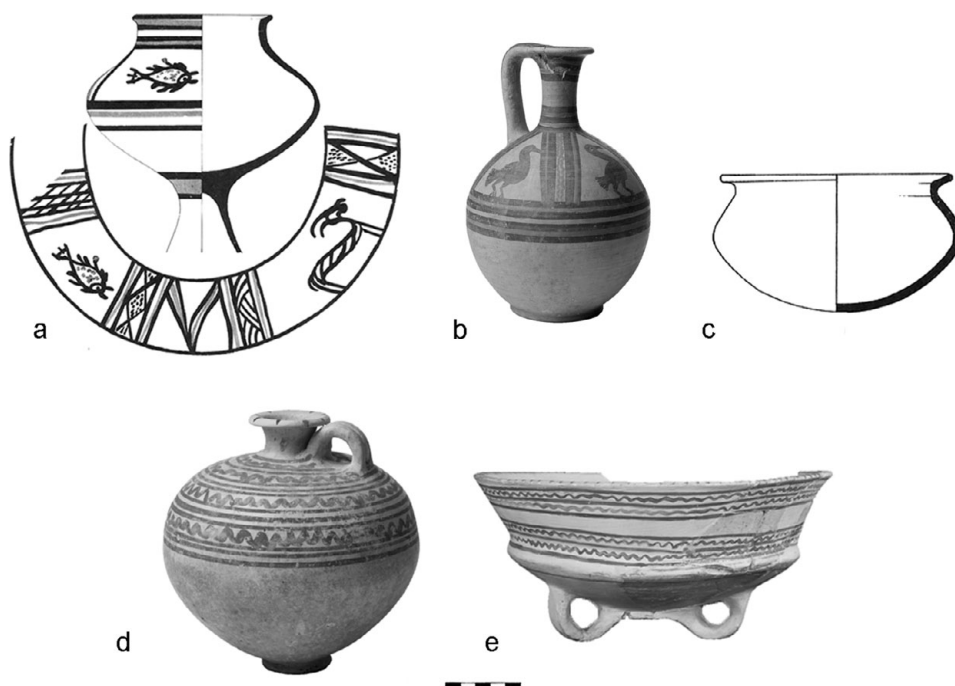


Figure 6.2 Pottery at the MB-LB transition: (a, b) Wheelmade Bichrome goblet and jug, (c) transitional MB-LB cooking pot and (d, e) Chocolate-on-White jug and mixing bowl. Drawings after Stern 1984: figs. 6:2, 7:10. Photos by M. Sucholowski and M. Salzberger. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

thickness and burnish of the white slip and the execution of the designs. CW I represents the high-water mark of the Chocolate-on-White tradition, but it has been suggested that the thick white burnished slips of this stage are, in fact, intended to mask the uneven quality of the underlying ceramic fabric – an unevenness that pervades Levantine Late Bronze Age ceramic production.

Using the presence of Cypriot imports, developed Chocolate-on-White and transitional cooking pot types, additional sixteenth-century assemblages can be isolated in relatively recent publications. These include Hazor, Megiddo, Bet Shean, Yoqne'am, Tel Mor, Lachish and Tel Batash, and two important tomb assemblages, from Pella and from Jatt, to which we may add the somewhat older publication of Tel Mevorakh. Hazor and Megiddo present a similar aspect of stratigraphic continuity; recent publications show that their ceramic assemblages evolve in similar ways. At Megiddo, recent work has been conducted in the lower city that bolsters and refines the old excavation sequences worked out by Epstein and Kempinski for Strata X–IX, of the late MB and early LB, respectively.¹⁴ The Area F excavations in the lower city, north of the high mound, revealed a well-built residential quarter covering an MBA embankment that had established the boundary of the Strata XI–X town. Pottery associated with the earlier of two subphases, F10b,¹⁵ includes simple curved and carinated bowls, cooking pots with everted plain or thickened triangular rims (the “transitional” type that precedes the overhanging folded triangular rims of the LBA), Cypriot Bichrome and White Slip I, and Chocolate-on-White bowls and jugs. On the main mound, Kempinski posits considerable architectural continuity between the last MBA and the first LBA strata, evidenced in the persistence of intramural burials and the continued use of the massive tower temple constructed in the late MBA and the enlargement of existing structures near the city gate, which now served as the main palaces of the successive LBA rulers of the town. The shift in the location of the dynastic palace from the center to the periphery of the mound was perceived by Kempinski as a significant political statement, which he associated with Hurrians, who had become the new ruling caste and, being alien to the local population, preferred the security and quick egress afforded by the peripheral location to the earlier palace–temple dyad.¹⁶ Thus, even at a site characterized by continuous occupation, the sixteenth century marks certain significant changes in planning and the distribution of power.

The MB–LB transition at Hazor appears contiguous in terms of the “big picture,” but its details are elusive. The ritual axis described by Zuckerman retained its prominence.¹⁷ A significant expansion and formalization of the Area H temple courtyard, facing the city, can be attributed to LB I, but not to a specific phase within it. In Area F, there are LB I burials associated with a new monumental building, reconstructed by Yadin as a square temple.¹⁸ In the residential area of the lower town, Area C, Yadin attributed a rebuilding phase to a late phase in the LB I.¹⁹ On the acropolis, the “Long” or “Northern”

temple is ascribed, on stratigraphic grounds, to LB I, temporarily replacing the “Southern” temple of the MBA sacred precinct (see Chapter 5). Details of the acropolis stratigraphy, with associated ceramic assemblages, have been published by the Ben-Tor expedition.²⁰ It is exceedingly difficult to tease out the sixteenth-century assemblage from these publications, and it is possible that, as an essentially independent political and economic entity, Hazor’s trajectory is not directly comparable to that of the rest of the Levant.

Two strata, XXa and XXb, are attributed to the LB I at Tel Yoqne’am.²¹ The earlier of the two, XXb, was built on a thick constructional fill that put the MBA fortifications out of use. It appears to represent part of a ring of houses built along the perimeter of the mound, lightly protected (mainly against erosion of the slope) by a terrace wall. Both phases of Stratum XX are characterized by jar burials with piriform juglets and carinated bowls interred beneath the floors in the MBA tradition – a practice discontinued in LB II. The pottery repertoire from the two phases is fragmentary, with the former phase leaning toward the MBA and the later, with Chocolate-on-White, Cypriot Bichrome, and Cypriot Monochrome and Base-Ring I, sitting more firmly in the LBA. “Transitional” plain everted-rim cooking pots are more common in the earlier assemblage, and blunt triangular rims in the later.

At the Hebrew University excavations at Tel Bet She’an, there is a stark stratigraphic discontinuity between the last MBA stratum (Stratum X in the general periodization, but R₃ in the more refined Hebrew University sequence of Area R) and the earliest of the LBA strata – local stratum R₂ in the Hebrew University sequence.²² Where the former consisted of a large and rather densely settled village, the latter comprised “a modest temple and a few additional rooms and installations,” confined to a small part of the mound and missed in the earlier excavations. The temple plan does not conform to any particular standard, but belongs to a class of informal cult structures, with MBA roots, that characterizes the LB I (Figure 6.3). The 14 × 11.75 meter building

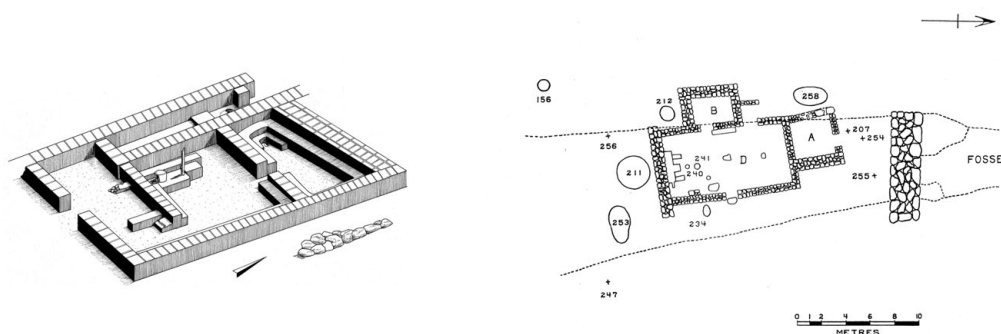


Figure 6.3 LB IA shrines at Bet Shean (courtesy of the Tel Beth Shean Expedition, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and Lachish (adapted from Tufnell et al. 1940).

was approached by way of a courtyard flanked by two small chambers with plaster floors and containing a deep stone-lined silo. The broad entrance hall was subdivided into small chambers, one of which yielded a Hyksos scarab. The main hall was entered from its southeast corner and was paved with white plaster, which also covered the benches lining its eastern, southern and part of its northern walls. Abutting the bench on the south was a plastered brick platform topped by a cylindrical basalt base, possibly marking the focus of the cult. The third, inner hall was trapezoidal in shape (possibly due to a renovation that truncated it) and, like the first, plastered and lined with benches. Narrow rooms built along the flank of the middle and inner hall contained pot stands and a plastered installation where liquids were evidently pooled and drained away. The ceramic corpus of the temple and surrounding rooms and courtyards, largely fragmentary, included a plethora of bowls, preparation vessels and pot stands. The fabric is noticeably coarser than in the preceding MBA strata, and the everted rim and plain triangular rim are both common. Chocolate-on-White and the related “White Ware” vessels, first introduced in the late MBA strata at Bet She’an, reach their maximum distribution in Stratum R2, comprising about 6 percent of the assemblage. Cypriot imports include a few Monochrome, Base-Ring I and White Slip sherds. There is some local bichrome pottery, but apparently no imported vessels of this type.

Tel Mevorakh, on the Carmel coast, has been mentioned in Chapter 5 as a coastal citadel set on a pisé rampart. In early LB I, the krater created by the MBA ramparts was deliberately filled in to provide a platform for a new structure – a 5×10 meter shrine, probably entered from the south, its floor, benches, platforms and walls coated with a thick coat of plaster.²³ Benches were built along the northern and eastern walls, a massive pillar base was placed in the middle of the hall, while in the northwest corner, to the left as one entered, there was a podium furnished with several steps, a socket for a wooden post or pillar, and a lower dais extending along the western wall. Numerous vessels were found associated with the podium in both Stratum XI, the foundation phase, and Stratum X, a later renovation. The shrine was surrounded by a spacious, partly paved courtyard. Finds from Stratum XI include numerous coarse bowls and chalices, a local bichrome-painted chalice that seems to show a scene of an ibex hunted by beasts of prey, a unique imported bichrome goblet with fish and ibex framed by geometric triglyphs (see Figure 6.2), two additional goblets with geometric bichrome decorations, several dipper jugs, a lamp and an everted-rim “transitional” cooking pot. In addition to the Bichrome ware, Cypriot imports include a large group of Monochrome bowls and a White Slip I bowl. Several minute White Slip II fragments are attributed to this stratum, but they should be considered intrusive, and the assemblage as a whole can be assigned safely to the sixteenth century.

At Tel Batash, a stratigraphic discontinuity between the “citadel” of Strata XII–XI and the Stratum X domestic (?) Building 720, built above it, is

accompanied by what appears to be a gradual shift in the character of the ceramic industry over the extended occupation of this building.²⁴ Panitz-Cohen describes changes in the fabric and technology that seem to occur in the course of the sixteenth century, with a trend toward thicker bowls, a movement from plain everted to triangular everted cooking pot rims, a mix of MB and LB storage jar and pithos types, and small quantities of Cypriot imports, including Bichrome, Monochrome, White Slip I and transitional II and some Base-Ring sherds.

The major MBA site of Lachish, which boasted massive fortifications and a large palace, was destroyed before the end of the MBA and partly resettled still within that period. The late MBA “squatter” occupation was soon abandoned, and, during most of the sixteenth century, only a handful of ceramics emanating from pits and living surfaces represent occupation on the mound proper.²⁵ At the foot of the mound, however, set in the fill of the rock-cut moat to the west of the mound, a small, informal shrine was constructed – the Lachish Fosse Temple (Figure 6.3).²⁶ The small shrine was rebuilt twice during the LBA, doubling in size, but the original structure, Fosse Temple I, was a modest one, 10 × 5 meters, with two small annexes and an area around the shrine pocked with numerous refuse pits. The original hall appears to have been a broad room, entered from the east, with a central row of pillars and a raised podium on the south side (to the left, as one entered), next to which there were ceramic containers, a baking tray and dipper juglets, suggestive of libation rituals. In her reappraisal of the ceramic assemblage associated with Fosse Temple I, Singer-Avitz demonstrated that the pits associated with this phase contain pottery that is by and large earlier than the material found on the floors of the shrine.²⁷ These pits contain, once again, Cypriot Bichrome bowls, Monochrome bowls, Base-Ring I bowls and kraters, a White Slip I bowl and a Black Lustrous juglet (which joins the other Cypriot forms on the cusp of the MB–LB transition)²⁸. The contents of these pits indicate that the shrine was originally built in the sixteenth century (LB IA), when the summit of the mound was virtually uninhabited.

Tel Mor, a small site on the southern coast, provides another stratified sequence (Strata XII–X), unfortunately of limited extent, apparently covering the MB–LB transition.²⁹ It is noteworthy for the fact that both the purported late MB and the early LB I deposits have a cultic character, with votive vessels, a fallow deer antler, a seven-spouted lamp, chalices and imported vessels – Egyptian and Cypriot in origin. A fine bichrome krater is unstratified and Stratum XI provided a jar handle stamped with a seventeenth-century design scarab. Cooking pots are of the transitional types in the earliest phase and triangular in the following phase.

Tomb 62 at Pella, attributed to MB II according to the terminology favored by that expedition,³⁰ includes Chocolate-on-White vessels and related fine Jordan Valley “White Ware,” a Red Lustrous bottle, a Black Lustrous juglet,

Monochrome ware, and scarabs of Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Seventeenth Dynasty kings (Nubuserre, Apophis and Kamose). It is comparable with the early phase of a tomb from Jatt, in the northern coastal plain, which yielded local imitation bichrome, Chocolate-on-White, Base-Ring I, an early Monochrome bowl, Black Lustrous juglets and a group of rare Cypriot imports that can all be attributed an early date in the Late Cypriot I: a Black Lustrous Wheelmade jug, a Black Slip V juglet and a cylindrical Tell el-Yahudiya juglet of Cypriot origin.³¹ The importation of these rare types highlights the demand, in early LB I, for narrow-necked fine-ware vessels required for burial rituals at sites where there was continuous settlement from the MBA.

Further sites could be adduced to represent the sixteenth-century transitional assemblages, but the picture is reasonably clear and consistent.

- With few exceptions, the MB–LB transition at stratified sites is marked by structural discontinuity, often accompanied by the decommissioning of fortifications and the deposition of constructional fills.
- Settled sites often shrank in size in the MB–LB transition, or were less densely populated.
- There was a loss of variety and quality in the local ceramic industry, compensated for by the continued acquisition of Bichrome and Chocolate-on White vessels and the increased importation of Cypriot Monochrome, White Slip I and Base-Ring vessels, especially of bowls for cultic use and juglets for burials.
- In the local industry, there was a transition to coarser wares and to triangular-rim carinated cooking pots.
- Interregional trade was limited: Cypriot wares stay near the coast, and Jordan Valley wares stay inland, for the most part.
- “Informal” shrines proliferated, often with no related settlement remains.

I shall bring all of these observations into alignment in a moment, but first, there is an immediate implication that must be drawn to complete the picture. In Chapter 5, it was suggested that the Middle Bronze settlement system, *as an integrated whole*, collapsed, at least in part, before the turn of the sixteenth century. With the nature of the sixteenth-century ceramic repertoire established, and the contraction of many important MBA sites established, the broader settlement picture – and the question of what might have come in place of the MBA network – may be addressed.

It is by now a commonplace that the LBA was the low-water mark of settlement in wide tracts of the southern Levant. Moreover, this apparent “depopulation” was shared across a broader region³² – a matter to which we will return below. But it is worth considering what the settlement picture might have been in the LB I, that is, in the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries BCE. Gonen, using data available in the late 1970s, noted a sharp dip of about 50 percent in both the number and relative size of excavated sites attributed to

the earlier part of the period (there was a significant – although not complete – recovery in the latter part of the LBA).³³ These numbers have since been reinforced by survey results from most parts of the Levant. In virtually all areas of survey, all parts of the LBA are lumped together, and in most areas, LBA settlement is in sharp decline, in relation to the MBA. In most cases, surveyors note that the LBA pottery was recovered only from stratified mounds or large sites, and as we have seen that these were not all immediately resettled in LB I, there is a case to be made that the sixteenth- to fifteenth-century figures should be smaller than those cited for the LBA as a whole.

In coastal Lebanon, LB I is represented, as far as we know, by a handful of settlements and associated jar burials (Sarepta, Tyre, Beirut), with only Tell Arqa expanding in this period.³⁴ In the Bīqa', Marfoe noted that the MB II settlement system seems to have entered into decline in the seventeenth century BCE, decreasing from 58 sites to a probable 18 (with 13 additional questionable identifications) in LB I.³⁵ The depopulation was more marked in the northern part of the Bīqa', which lies well away from the south Levantine areas that are considered to have been affected by internal Canaanite politics or impacted by Egypt in the sixteenth century. Bīqa' sites show a recovery in the fourteenth century, according to Marfoe, and a renewed decline at the close of the LBA. In the contiguous Upper Galilee – a steep decline is recorded, from fifty-two MB sites to fourteen in all stages of the LBA.³⁶

In the central highlands of western Palestine, the total numbers of sites recorded in the West Bank database³⁷ decreases from 513 sites with an MBA presence to 142 sites with LBA pottery, of which 109 had been occupied in the MBA (i.e., they were multiperiod sites). This indicates that, leaving aside the burial sites (which decrease from 97 to 39), the great bulk of “missing” sites are rural, single-period occupations. Transjordanian data seem to indicate a reduction in settled area from the MB II in most areas,³⁸ but not a particularly dramatic one, as the region had not experienced the same scale of integrated settlement as the areas in the Jordan Valley and westward.

Only in the southern plains does there seem to be an LB renaissance,³⁹ but this has been shown to date largely to LB II, with a degree of fluidity between the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries (i.e., the expansion of some sites in the later part of the period came at the expense of other sites that contracted at this time).

In marginal areas, settlement seems to have been extremely sparse: there is no Negev settlement to speak of (leaving aside the copper-mining sites in the southern Arabah), and virtually nothing recorded in the southern Transjordanian plateau.

What we may take away from the settlement data is a portrait of steep decline in the MB–LB transition, with little evidence of recovery in most rural areas, especially in the highlands. Long-settled sites tended to survive the transition, though at a cost (and some did not), whereas marginal zones were

all but abandoned, as they had been in the MBA (but in contrast to other periods of de-urbanization, such as the IBA and the early Iron Age).

The different strands of evidence for significant change in the MB–LB transition, often glossed over because of the typological and stratigraphic continuity at high-profile sites like Megiddo and Hazor, can now be brought together. There was a significant discontinuity at the MB–LB transition, with large swathes of the countryside depopulated. These areas had formerly supported a thriving rural sector, dotted with villages, shrines and ceramic workshops. Now, only a few of the largest population centers maintained their status, while many others were reduced in size. The ceramic industry was decimated, leading to a significant loss of technical knowledge. Fine wares – especially bowls, jugs and juglets – were no longer being widely produced in the Levant, and were supplanted by specialized, imported products: these included Cypriot wares – mainly Monochrome, White Slip and Base-Ring bowls – for the coastal sites, and Chocolate-on-White for the Jordan Valley. The constraints evident in the geographic distribution of these fine wares points to a low level of communication between the longitudinal regions (coast, hill country, and rift valley).

A conspicuous proportion of the sites associated with the earliest phase of the LBA are partly – or entirely – cultic in nature. We have noted new LB shrines at Tel Mevorakh, Tel Bet Shean, Lachish and possibly Tel Mor. All lack a rigid plan – in contrast to the *in antis* or “Syrian” template that was followed in both large and small MBA temples – but they share several features, most notably their modest size and construction, their accessibility, the use of benches and platforms for the presentation of offerings, usually in bowls and chalices, and the existence of an external courtyard used for the disposal of the remains of ritual feasts or ceremonies. Both the informal plan and the repetitive features of these LB I shrines find antecedents in MBA cultic architecture, especially in the auxiliary structures of the late MB II temple complex at Tel Haror, described in Chapter 5. There, a divergence was found between the main, formal temple hall, found virtually empty of finds, the sacrificial feasting area associated with it, and the mass of individual acts of sacrifice, divination, offering and food consumption carried out in the auxiliary structures, which included a small chapel furnished with offering benches. The informal LB I shrines seem to have attempted to reproduce the accessible, informal aspect of Levantine cult practice in non-urban settings – whether on the coastal road (Tel Mor and Tel Mevorakh), at the foot of the uninhabited mound at Lachish, or along the Jordan Valley corridor (Tel Bet Shean and Tel Kitan; see below). At the same time, the great formal cult centers persisted, and perhaps even served as an anchor that allowed the ruling order at the sites to which they were attached to weather the social upheavals of the mid-second millennium. These would have included the temples of

Hazor, described above, the tower temples at Megiddo and Pella, and most likely the temple of Shechem as well.

Tel Kitan, about which we have only preliminary information, offers a potentially instructive order of events that ties together the formal/informal perspectives on cult.⁴⁰ In the MB II, a modest late MB I and early MB II village shrine had given way to a massive 14.3 × 11.5 meter hall, built in the formal Syrian style. But in LB I, after the large temple was destroyed, a new, modest, informal structure was built without any consideration for the earlier buildings, consisting of a hall, two back chambers and what appears to be an enclosed yard attached to it. This structure, like the other LB I temples, was replete with offering vessels and various trinkets and implements. The row of courtyard stelae, preserved through the MB II renovations, was now buried and its stones served as column bases for a house built on top of the earlier temple courtyard. The sequence at Tel Kitan appears to represent the gradual formalization of the institutional integration of ancestor cults as the MBA wore on – a process reversed at the start of the LBA, when new proprietors appear on the scene, oblivious to old attachments and commemorative practices.

It thus emerges that, while the agricultural and rural landscape were severely attenuated at the start of the LBA, the ritual coloring of the landscape became more prominent. In the large towns or centers, the great temples were maintained, presumably as a source of power, legitimation and revenue for the political elite. In the countryside, however, the situation is much more ambivalent. On the one hand, the informal wayside temples might be seen as a focus of community interaction for the “invisible” groups who had lost their foothold in abandoned villages and urban neighborhoods: a place needed for the preservation of collective identity, for calendric ceremonies and commemorations, for the affirmation or creation of kinship ties and exchanges, and so on. On the other, these shrines were not built on earlier hallowed ground, did not use the time-honored tradition of raising stelae for commemoration, and do not appear to be linked to communal sites such as cemeteries, as might have been expected. They are very much a creation of the new age, representing new forms of social interaction and “the invention of tradition.” In this sense, the shrines seem to be compensating for a loss, in a manner differing markedly from, for example, the EBA–IBA transition, when household cult corners, on the one hand, and memorial constructions in prominent places, on the other, preserved a sense of ritual continuity through times of significant social change.

THE LB I: A SUMMARY

Middle Bronze Age society can be conceived as a structure held together by a web of reciprocal obligations between the leading families, their retainers, and the other inhabitants of the fortified centers, on the one hand, and the

staple-producing rural sector, on the other. Integral to the urban-rural productive balance was a self-imposed limitation on centralization and on social and economic inequality, illustrated, *inter alia*, by the persistence of institutions such as the ubiquitous village shrine and the village potters' workshops. For their part, villagers could square any debts they might have incurred toward the urban centers by contributing *corvée* labor used in the construction of the massive fortifications and occasional public buildings and by participating, as foot-soldiers, in actual or merely latent (threatened) warfare.

Late MBA developments, as reflected in the archaeological evidence for early LB I, effectively dismantled this structure. The disappearance of the village sector, as recorded by surface surveys, would have completely undermined the previous balance of production, consumption and reciprocation. Extensive tracts of land would have lain fallow, while areas adjacent to the now (for the most part) smaller towns would presumably have been farmed by the inhabitants of those places and by non-sedentary seasonal workers, most likely as tenants of the great families in the towns or manors.⁴¹ The economic power of staple production was also severely curtailed – pithoi disappear temporarily from the local repertoire (with the notable exception of Hazor). Ceramic production was decimated, the loss of expertise so severe that fine-ware bowls – formerly produced in Canaan and particularly prized in ritual settings – had to be imported from Cyprus or from the surviving Chocolate-on-White workshops in the upper Jordan Valley or Biqua'. Moreover, the abandonment of most forms of collective endeavor – especially the construction and maintenance of fortifications – deprived non-elites of an important avenue of debt restitution. In fact, it appears that the exercise of violence was now placed in the hands of specialists (e.g., archers and charioteers), depriving towns of another avenue for collective participation, reciprocation, and legitimation of the polity and of its leadership. As we shall see below, the old staple economy was to be replaced by a wealth economy predicated on the exchange of exotic gifts between palace- or manor-dwelling heads of families. Such gifts were either procured by exchange or created by local artisans, attached to the palace, and so were out of reach to those outside the network.

Liverani, in his synthetic consideration of the Late Bronze of the core regions of the Ancient Near East,⁴² has also addressed the question of depopulation and the globalization of elite networks at the expense of local reciprocally reinforcing structures. He suggests that a technological change – the introduction of chariots and composite bows as a regular, dominant feature of LBA warfare – led to the creation of a new military aristocracy predicated on expertise: in particular, the expertise of people from the Indo-Iranian sphere in the raising and training of horses. According to Liverani, the creation of a military aristocracy, which was soon endowed with land and tenant farmers, rendered obsolete the old system of *corvée* labor and military (infantry) service as a form of reciprocation. This, coupled with palace-supported craft

Table 6.1 Tendencies of corporate/network modes, after Feinman 2000

Network	Corporate
Concentrated wealth	More even wealth distribution
Individual power	Shared power arrangements
Ostentatious consumption	More balanced accumulation
Prestige goods	Control of knowledge, cognitive codes
Patron/client factions	Corporate labor systems
Attached specialization	Emphasis on food production
Wealth finance	Staple finance
Princely burials	Monumental ritual spaces
Lineal kinship systems	Segmental organization
Power inherited through personal glorification	Power embedded in group association/affiliation
Ostentatious elite adornment	Symbols of office

specialization (particularly that related to metalworking, dyed textile production and glass-making), left the rural sector increasingly estranged from the wealth economies of the palace-dwelling elite and their retainers. Land could be alienated from its village owners, and debt-slavery became common.

It is striking to see the extent to which Liverani's depiction of the changes in the Syro-Mesopotamian societal infrastructure resonates with the archaeological record of the south Levantine sphere. Moreover, the chronology of these developments indeed suggests that the changes in the Levantine social fabric preceded and established the conditions for the dramatic political developments – the annexation of Canaan to the Egyptian New Kingdom empire. The new wealth economy, with its low population and limited agricultural output, permanently favored elites, allowing them to pursue a “network” political strategy, where prestige, wealth and influence are the main players, rather than a “corporate” one, in which labor and staple accumulation play a prominent role (Table 6.1).⁴³ Because a central pillar of the “network” system is “participation in extralocal networks and the accompanying differential access to prestigious marriage alliances, exotic goods, and specialized knowledge,”⁴⁴ Levantine networks were vulnerable to leverage by powerful external players, who had only to manipulate a thin stratum of elites, prop them up and play them against each other, in order to achieve their greater ends. In the context of the LBA southern Levant, Egypt was that external player, and it is to the renewed Egyptian presence in the Levant that we now turn.

EGYPT IN CANAAN 2.0: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE EGYPTIAN OCCUPATION

The broad historical outlines of the New Kingdom incursions into Canaan, followed by its annexation to the Egyptian sphere, are thoroughly

documented in contemporary texts from multiple perspectives.⁴⁵ After a series of raids and demonstrations of royal bravado in the southern and (mainly) northern Levant by the early kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Thutmose III defeats a coalition of local potentates at Megiddo in the first year of his reign, follows this up with additional campaigns in the north, announces the subjection of the greater part of the Levantine seaboard and establishes several seats of military and administrative control. This is followed up by additional campaigns by his successors, but for most of the fourteenth century and the start of the thirteenth century BCE, Egypt maintains its suzerainty without direct military intervention, by means of local proxies, resident governors (who are possibly locals as well) and officers, diplomatic couriers, and small military contingents. Gaza and Jaffa are the only likely locations of permanent Egyptian presence in the southern Levant at this time, although Egyptian agents are attested at various locations, particularly in the south Biqa' town of Kumidi (Kamid el-Loz). In the thirteenth century, from the days of Seti I onward, Egyptian campaigning in the Levant is renewed, and its presence intensifies, even as its international standing declines. This continues until the days of the lesser Ramesside kings, who are the last to leave evidence of formal Egyptian presence in Canaan.

Clearly, the textual record on the history of the New Kingdom's Asiatic empire (in Egyptian texts), on its internal and diplomatic workings (in the Akkadian el-Amarna correspondence), on its international impact (in Egyptian and Hittite records) and on its social and cultural influence in Egypt itself forms a fruitful line of inquiry from which to extrapolate the nature of Levantine society and economy (as well as historical geography, diplomatic history and more) – one that has been mined extensively by historians.⁴⁶ But we would do well to keep in mind that the categories used by Egyptian and Akkadian scribes in royal annals and in diplomatic correspondence cannot be simply assumed to be Levantine social and political categories, much less accurate representations of the lives of Levantine people. The top-down historical reconstruction must therefore be complemented with an archaeological one, built from the material record and working its way up.

Here, in keeping with the modest aims of this study, I wish to try and gauge the impact of Egypt in Canaan, in the immediate and in the deeper sense: What is the archaeological evidence for Egyptian presence, as an occupying power, in Canaan? Can Egyptian colonizers be identified in the material culture, and what is the nature of their interaction and entanglement with local communities? Are we even certain who is an “Egyptian,” and who is not? And do Egyptian ideologies and cultural predilections have a lasting impact on Levantine cultural practice? The key to the identification of a foreign community, as discussed in previous cases, lies in identifying cultural redundancy: performances carried out in an authentic material context (i.e., with culturally “correct” components), with clear antecedents in a geographically distant

tradition, that can be shown to duplicate local traditional practice without obvious social or economic advantage. If this sounds ambiguous, or open to multiple interpretations, that is because the issue in question is fraught with interpretive difficulties and, ultimately, resists verification. Even after a century of excavations, the claim that New Kingdom Egypt conducted most of its business in Asia through intermediaries, with minimal military presence and cultural impact, remains defensible. For the sake of clarity, in the discussion that follows, neither “Egyptian” nor “Canaanite” should be understood to represent homogeneous ethnicities; rather, they represent geographical origins and, by virtue of these, cultural and political affiliations.⁴⁷

The most convincing case for resident Egyptians in Canaan can be made through the presentation of three sites: Jaffa, which provides the earliest and most persistent evidence for Egyptian occupation; Bet Shean, which offers the richest trove of Egyptian and Egyptian-style buildings and artifacts; and Deir el-Balah, a liminal site near the border between Canaan and Sinai. Bet Shean and Deir el-Balah are both settlement and cemetery sites, the cemeteries yielding, in both cases, large assemblages of anthropoid clay coffins, usually considered a prime marker of Egyptian cultural practice. With these sites serving as a model, further sites evincing Egyptian involvement can be described and evaluated.

Jaffa

Although little of the ancient site, buried beneath the historic and modern metropolis, is available for study, excavations in Jaffa – the only sizable port on the central south Levantine coast, with easy access to the fertile inner coastal plain – provide a valuable window on to the earliest arguably permanent Egyptian foothold in Canaan, whose capture by Thutmose III’s general, Djehuty, had, by Ramesside times, been incorporated into Egyptian folklore.⁴⁸ Aaron Burke, summing up the results of his own and of earlier excavations, portrays a fifteenth-century (late Stratum VI) structure, interpreted as a kitchen, with an adjacent pit found full of Egyptian-style “flowerpot” bowls and conical funnel-like vessels of unknown use, which are suggested to be related to the production of beer (Figure 6.4).⁴⁹ Although Burke and Lords describe the pit as a firing-pit, excavations in the contemporary site A-345 in northern Sinai testify to the firing of “flowerpots” in vertical kilns.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the bulk of the Jaffa Egyptian-style vessels – including scores of bowls and ovoid jars – are made of local raw materials and hence were fabricated in Jaffa itself. The co-presence of potters familiar with Egyptian techniques, everyday Egyptian-style vessels for food storage, preparation and consumption, as well as pots, scarabs and faience objects originating in Egypt proper, strongly argues for the settlement of an Egyptian garrison at Jaffa in the late fifteenth century.

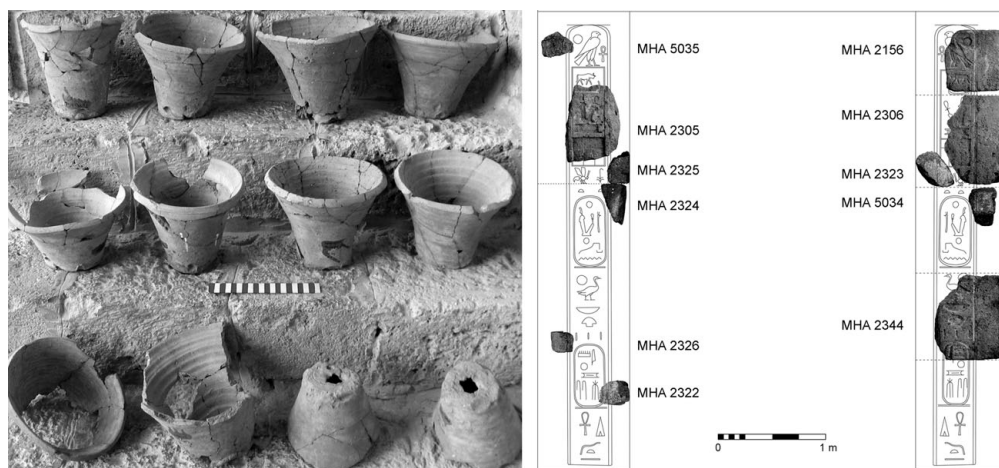


Figure 6.4 Locally produced Egyptian-type “flowerpots” from the early phase of the Egyptian presence at Jaffa and the reconstructed façade of the Ramesside portal. Courtesy of the Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project.

Shortly after the destruction of the building described above, Burke suggests that construction began on a much more substantial edifice – a gatehouse, presumably belonging to a large fortress.⁵¹ This gate, which was rebuilt several times over the fourteenth, thirteenth and twelfth centuries (Strata V–IV), was at one point in the thirteenth century furnished with inscribed limestone doorjambs bearing the royal titles of Ramesses II (Figure 6.4), which were later dismantled during one of the periodic destructions of the gate (attributed to recurrent episodes of Canaanite armed resistance) and reused in its renovation. The final destruction of the gate – and presumably of the fortress to which it provided access – found its timber-roofed passage being used for commerce and storage. It was found replete with carbonized seeds of grain, legumes, grapes and olives and Egyptian, Levantine and Cypriot ceramics. The late twelfth-century BCE radiocarbon dates provided by the seeds could indicate the date of the final Egyptian presence in LBA Canaan.

It is extraordinary and not self-evident that an Egyptian potter would have been seconded to the earliest known garrison in Canaan.⁵² If the relation between flowerpots and beer-production is considered firm, then it appears that the logistics of Egyptian military expeditions included the provision of a resident potter, who would provide vessels used for the preparation of beer (and bread?) and for the consumption of these and perhaps other foods, and perhaps for the short-term storage of relevant ingredients as well (e.g., in locally produced ovoid jars). Other aspects of food preparation and consumption, or indeed of staple processing (as evidenced in the first Egyptian colonization of Canaan, in the EBA), did not require the provision of Egyptian hardware. Moreover, neither the bowls nor even the flowerpots diverge to such a great extent from local containers as to preclude replacement by a local

Levantine vessel, in terms of practical function. Thus, it is likely that ritual and symbolic requirements were being met, rather than functional ones. They would have been enmeshed in practices that set apart the users of the Egyptian utensils from others, created a bond between them, and were considered vital to the well-being of the Egyptian imperial enterprise. As will appear below, however, this did not require physical segregation between “Egyptians” and “Canaanites.”

Tel Bet Shean

Bet Shean is mentioned in Egyptian New Kingdom sources, but it is only through excavation that its significance in the Egyptian deployment in Canaan has come to be appreciated. Settled without a break from Late Bronze IA, Bet Shean serves as a yardstick against which other excavated sites associated with Egyptian domination are to be measured.

It will be recalled that, despite its strategic location at the junction of the Jezreel and Jordan Valleys, in a lush valley watered by perennial springs, Tel Bet Shean was only an unfortified, if densely settled, village in the late MBA (Level X of the University Museum Excavations; Stratum R₃ of the later Hebrew University excavations), and, following its abandonment, the site of an LB IA shrine, with little or no associated settlement (identified by the Hebrew University excavations only, Stratum R₂). It was around this shrine that later LB settlement accreted, eventually filling out the upper part of the mound, but never exceeding its 1.5- to 2.0-hectare summit. Level IX/Stratum R_{1a-b} of the LB IB/LB IIA represents a complete rebuild and upgrade of the ritual center, which now consisted of a large temple complex, associated structures and residences, and a massive, but largely eroded building situated at the southern edge of the mound.⁵³ Mullins presents the main temple structure (Building 1230) as a massive, Syrian-style long-room, entered from its southwest corner and measuring about 10 × 12 meters (5 × 7.5 meter interior). Typically for formal temples of this type, no finds could be associated with the main hall. Adjoining the hall on the south was an area identified by the original excavators as a temple, but more likely serving as a publicly accessible courtyard for ritual activity associated with the temple. It contained a plastered brick podium, near which a carved basalt altar was found. Several stone-lined roasting pits were identified, by both the old and new expeditions, in spaces adjacent to the courtyard. A basalt stela carved with an extraordinarily spirited rendering of a lion and lioness at play, in a unique artistic idiom that belongs to the Syro-Canaanite sphere, comes from the large building lying to the south of the temple.

Most authors identify Level IX at Bet Shean, attributed to the late fifteenth and all of the fourteenth century BCE, as the first stratum occupied by an Egyptian garrison at the town, and the large building to the south as their

presumed headquarters. The archaeological evidence for this is, however, less than convincing. Martin's detailed study of the Egyptian ceramics indicates a minor component of locally made Egyptian ceramics in the settlement, amounting to 1–4 percent of the total pottery excavated in the stratum in the Hebrew University excavations (depending on the ascription of several borderline types), and none in the LB I–IIA tombs in the cemetery excavated to the north of the mound.⁵⁴ There are, in fact, far fewer Eighteenth Dynasty type vessels in the 3,500 square meters excavated at Tel Bet Shean than in the small soundings excavated at Jaffa. Insofar as they testify to the presence of Egyptians – or perhaps the conducting of ritual activities by Egyptians – at the site, this presence must have been limited in duration and involved a small contingent of persons. This does not preclude the presence of Egyptian officials and soldiers at the site in the fourteenth century, but it places a limit on the extent and intensity of imperial interaction with this Levantine site before 1300 BCE.

Things changed dramatically at Bet Shean in the transition to the thirteenth century.⁵⁵ Level VIII appears to be a transitional phase, during which many buildings of the previous level were cleared away or leveled to make room for a suite of completely new administrative structures that comprise the following stratum, Level VII. It seems likely that the beginning of this operation coincides with the punitive campaigns carried out by Seti I, commemorated in two stelae erected at Bet Shean (these were found in secondary use, in later strata). These brief campaigns, one mounted against three rebellious towns, Pella, Hamath and Yeno'am, and the other against local Apiru renegades, would have marked a shift in the hands-off diplomacy of the late Eighteenth Dynasty and the installation of the two stelae would have been potent reminders of the imminence of imperial retribution against any attempt to undermine the new order. But the mere installation of stelae (one more, generally lauding the Pharaoh's military prowess and faithfulness, was erected in the days of Seti's successor, Ramesses II) was not sufficient; the new town at Bet Shean was built as a fixed seat of Egyptian power and control, maintained for more than a century until the Egyptian withdrawal from Canaan.

Level VII, excavated by both the earlier and later expeditions, includes a new collection of administrative and residential structures built around the redesigned cultic core. Buildings NB, NC, Q2 and 1380 (the "migdol") are massive administrative structures built to the north, northwest and west of the temple area, while to its southeast lies one of the residential quarters. Adjacent to the Building 1380 is Building 1373 ("the commandant's house"), a square 10 × 10 meter brick building with Egyptian architectural affinities. All these structures produced Egyptian pottery, most of it locally made, in great quantity and variety, but even here, Levantine pottery was not absent, with Building NB yielding an assemblage of local-tradition storage jars and a collared-rim pithos – the only one of its kind found at Bet Shean. Martin notes that in the

residential quarter, east of the temple, the proportion of Egyptian to local Levantine-tradition pottery was markedly less than in the public areas, suggesting that a sizable Levantine population was still present at the site.

The Level VII temple was a new construction, oriented toward the north, and incorporating structural features and objects that place it in a liminal cultural space between Canaan and Egypt. Built in Egyptian fashion, without stone foundations, the temple consists of a main hall entered indirectly through an anteroom and a rear chamber approached from the main hall by way of an off-center flight of stairs. The broad-room hall, about 10×8 meters in size, was lined with benches on the east and north, and had two bin-like installations in its northwest and southwest corners. The raised rear chamber contained an altar and another bin. The courtyards surrounding the building seem to have served auxiliary cultic functions. The finds that could be associated with this temple were not all found in situ. A small Egyptian votive stela, dedicated by one Pa-ra-em-heb to his father, “the builder” Amen-em-apt, shows two Egyptian worshippers before the throne of an otherwise unknown god identified as “Mekal, the great god, lord of Beth Shean”; another private stela depicts a woman worshipping a goddess, identified as Astarte/Hathor; in addition, there are numerous beads, jewelry, faience and glass vessels, clay cobra figurines and a large collection of Egyptian ceramic vessels, including a rare jar molded in the image of the god Bes. The eclectic features and objects described above resonate with the character of the informal LBA cult, but show a marked Egyptian flavor, as if an effort was being made to incorporate the pre-existing numinous qualities of the sacred precinct into the new political order. In this context, the Mekal stela stands out as a rather obvious, even naïve attempt to signal a sort of religious conciliation. As we shall see, the evidence for such integration or creolization remains strong in the succeeding stratum, Level VI, despite a strong program of Egyptianization that was effected by the Twentieth Dynasty officials (Figure 6.5).

Indeed, Level VI construction, dated to the twelfth century, or Transitional Bronze–Iron Age (TBI), shows some contradictory trends. On the one hand, the declining imperial apparatus insisted on projecting an image of Egyptian success and prosperity. On the other, the administrative functions of the site appear to be on the wane, and Levantine practice continues to inhabit every household. In terms of imperial construction, the three large administrative structures were replaced at this stage by one (or possibly two) formal structures: Building 1500, which replaced Building Q2, and Building 1700, which lay to its east, partly above Buildings NB and NC. The latter structures were renovated and reduced in size, while the “migdol” and “commandant’s house” were replaced by buildings of uncertain function. The temple was also renovated, with few significant changes, while the residential quarter to its east and south expanded.

Building 1500 was the “ceremonial palace” of Level VI,⁵⁶ dominated by a spacious central hall, whose roof was supported by two massive wooden pillars

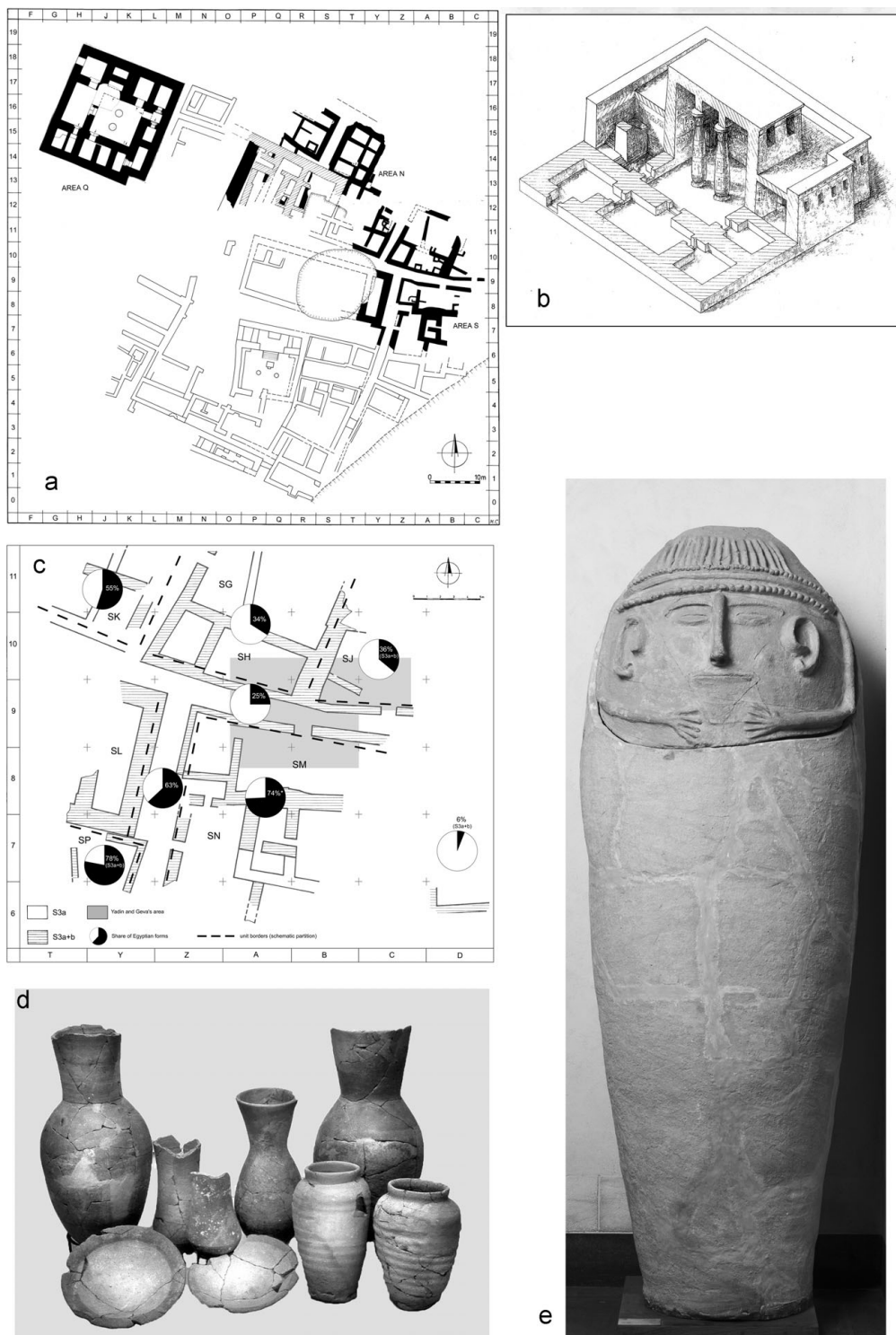


Figure 6.5 Egypt in Bet Shean: (a) plan of Level VI (Hebrew University excavations), (b) reconstruction of Building 1500, (c) relative quantities of Egyptian and local pottery in Level VI houses, (d) locally made Egyptian pottery and (e) an anthropoid coffin with “grotesque” features, from the northern cemetery. Panels a, b and d courtesy of the Tel Beth Shean Expedition, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; panel c courtesy of M. Martin. Photo by M. Sucholowski. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

with limestone bases and lotus-shaped capitals. It was built, atypically for Egyptian buildings, on stone foundations, but its main entrance and several doorjambs were decorated with dedicatory hieroglyphic inscriptions, and one of its entrance lintels with the name (and carved figure) of Ramesses Weserkhepesh, “the commander of the troops” during the reign of Ramesses III.⁵⁷ Soft limestone T-shaped doorsills, locally made in Egyptian style, were installed in most of the doorways.

The complete reorientation of Tel Bet Shean in Levels VIII–VI required a sustained administrative effort, a large workforce, military and logistic support, and the participation of expert craftspersons. Some, presumably, would have been on temporary commission, but others must have become permanent residents of the site, effectively forming a small colony. Among the latter, potters are archaeologically prominent: throughout the thirteenth and the first half of the twelfth centuries, Egyptian potters, kept up-to-date in the latest trends in homeland ceramic production, provided about half of the total ceramic output at Bet Shean (although this was, admittedly, a rather monotonous assemblage, comprising mainly simple bowls and limited numbers of closed vessels – generally less than 10 percent of the assemblage). That local Levantine production remained a robust industry, providing a wider range of forms than the Egyptian industry, indicates that Canaanites did not leave the site but remained in place, alongside the Egyptian colonizers. Judging by the extent of the residential areas in Levels VII and VI, the total population of Bet Shean would have numbered a few hundred souls.

The Level VI houses (specifically, the HU Strata S4–S3 houses, for which quantitative data are abundant) show that, even where Egyptian pottery was common, fundamental household functions such as milling and cooking were carried out in Levantine utensils, while textile preparation used a mixture of local spindles and Egyptian spinning bowls (see Table 6.2).⁵⁸ It has therefore been suggested that, at Bet Shean, culturally Egyptian men and culturally Levantine women cohabited and formed domestic partnerships.

The Egyptian requirement for great numbers of bowls and beer-related containers requires explanation. For the most part, potters and pottery are neglected in pictorial and textual evidence. However, their intimate connection to cuisine and to physical well-being must have surrounded them with certain proscriptions and gestures that were so embedded in cultural performance as to require no explicit comment. An analogous situation is described in the archaeological literature on the Dutch East India Company (VOC) colony at the Cape of Good Hope in the seventeenth century CE.⁵⁹ The colony began as an emplacement of 132 male employees of the VOC – soldiers, traders, clerks and officials – in a setting of African herders, hunters and gatherers. “Lacking ceramic vessels,” report Jordan and Schrire, “the garrison ate from a common trencher or from the cooking pots themselves, using spoons, shells, and hands. Commandant Wagenaer was disgusted at this

Table 6.2 Cultural traditions in Levels VII–VI at Bet Shean

Egyptian	Levantine	Other or Mixed
Construction		
• Brick on sand foundations • Formal administrative and ceremonial structures • Carved decorative elements	• Brick on stone foundations • Domestic installations	• Level VII–VI temple
Symbolic/Ideological		
• Royal stelae • Inscriptions • Statues • Zoomorphic figurines • Bes jar	• Cult stands • Figurines	• “Mixed messages” on votive stelae • Cypriot figurines
Ceramics		
• Bowls (many) • Beer bottles (few) • Storage jars (few) • Cups	• Bowls • Cooking pots (all) • Kraters (most) • Jars (most) • Pithoi • Jugs and flasks	• LH IIIC vessels
Preciosities		
• Scarabs and plaques • Pendants and beads • Few metal artifacts	• Jewelry • Metal tools and weapons	• Silver hoards (Syrian)

spectacle and requested earthenware potters to join the company in 1663. The first potter arrived by 1665, when the earliest vessels were produced... The last recorded potter is listed in 1790, five years before the end of VOC rule.”⁶⁰ In tandem with the production of coarse European earthenware for the use of the VOC soldiers, porcelains and other fine wares from Europe and the East were imported by upper-echelon colonists. European women rarely joined the colonists abroad, and company policy generally encouraged employees to take non-European servants, concubines or wives.⁶¹ Thus, the persons using the “civilizing” European coarse-ware were mostly Asian and some African women, who prepared a mixed cuisine based on locally available vegetables, imported rice and East Asian condiments. The resultant creole cuisine, recorded in verbal descriptions, is physically and archaeologically represented by European-style cookware with a few added utensils used for cooking rice.

A plausible scenario for thirteenth- to twelfth-century Bet Shean places some scores of Egyptian officials, clerks, masons, soldiers and craftsmen as long-term residents at the site, eventually moving from their Level VII barracks to Level VI homes, where they cohabited with Levantine wives and concubines, acquired either from the resident Canaanites or during Egyptian military activity. By the late twelfth century, when a formal political withdrawal of

Egyptian imperial institutions occurred, ethnically mixed families may well have stayed on, preserving the memory of Egyptian presence and perhaps invoking the protection of Egyptian gods, as seen in the Iron Age (Late Level VI) temples and possibly the northern cemetery as well.

The Level VII–VI burials in the Northern Cemetery of Bet Shean⁶² are all associated with anthropoid coffins, while earlier, fifteenth- to fourteenth-century burials are not. Clay anthropoid coffins (Figure 6.5e) were full-sized ceramic burial containers that emulated Egyptian painted prototypes made of wood or cartonnage (layers of plastered linen or papyrus), each furnished with a removable lid upon which features were molded, either using carefully modeled and stylized “naturalistic” templates or by application of clay in a free “grotesque” design.⁶³ All LBA–TBI burials were interred in old rock-cut tombs of the IBA. Oren cites the presence of fragments of at least fifty coffins in the eleven excavated tombs. For the most part, the coffins had been smashed and their contents scattered, precluding the correlation of coffins, skeletal remains and finds. This applies to the question of the chronology and cultural affiliation of the “naturalistic” and “grotesque” styles, which occur together at Bet Shean. The latest material associated with coffin burials postdates Level VI, and might indicate the continued use of coffins or – as is likely – coffin fragments, in the immediate aftermath of the Egyptian occupation. Finds included local Levantine and Egyptian pottery, some imported wares in the earlier tombs (mainly Mycenaean), and, in a few tombs, Egyptian jewelry, plaques and scarabs, cosmetic implements, an ivory gaming board, a three-piece bronze wine-set, and simplified *shabti* figurines, which accompany the dead in Egyptian burials. By their very nature, coffin burials interred in local, pre-existing tomb-caves and furnished with artifacts of Egyptian, Egyptianizing, and local-tradition manufacture are entangled entities, representing thoroughly hybridized performances that are fully in tune with the evidence from the residential areas on the mound proper.

Before leaving this site, we may cast a brief glance at its “post-colonial” phase, Level V. After the abandonment of Level VI, the town was completely rebuilt. There are, however, two important indications of continuity:

1. The temple, now a double building, was rebuilt on the old east–west axis, with an entirely local cultic repertoire; however, in the courtyard of the temple, several old Egyptian monuments were reerected, including royal stelae of Seti I and Ramesses II, and a life-sized statue of Ramesses III; other stela fragments were placed inside the temple structures. This suggests a degree of respect to the departed Egyptian community, perhaps offered by residents of mixed ethnicity who stayed on.
2. Local Levantine ceramic production was barely affected by the departure of the Egyptians and their potters, experiencing only slight quantitative “readjustments.”⁶⁴ This points us in another direction: the fundamental autonomy of Levantine society even within this central outpost of Egyptian power.

Deir el-Balah

Located 14 kilometers southwest of the main Egyptian base in Gaza, Deir el-Balah differs from Jaffa and Bet Shean as a place established *de novo* by the Egyptian administration. The site has two important components: an administrative and industrial center (or fortress) and a large cemetery, noted for its collection of anthropoid burial coffins. As a site constructed by Egyptians, in the service of imperial policy, the Egyptian–Levantine interaction evident at Deir el-Balah should add another perspective on the nature of the Egyptian imperial project.

The fortress/residence at Deir el-Balah was excavated in 1977–1982, but in the long run-up to publication, its principal excavators developed divergent ideas about its stratigraphy. Briefly put, T. Dothan and B. Brandl, who directed the excavation, assign its first phase – the residence – to the fourteenth century BCE, preceding the establishment of the cemetery, while the thirteenth century is represented by a long sequence that includes a massive administrative structure, of which only the foundations survive, a corresponding water reservoir, and a later industrial phase, corresponding to the use of the cemetery.⁶⁵ Other members of the team, A. Killebrew, P. Goldberg and A.M. Rosen, offer a simplified stratigraphy, which collapses all the remains into the thirteenth and early twelfth centuries, with an earlier phase consisting of a partly excavated elongated, multiroom structure that served partly as a potter's workshop (its kilns set in the filled-in krater) and partly as an administrative structure, and a later phase, of the massive fortress-like administrative structure that has its best parallels in Nineteenth to Twentieth Dynasty settings, such as Level VII at Bet Shean.⁶⁶

According to the excavators, Egyptian pottery dominated the assemblage in all stratigraphic phases. Still, as in other sites, important categories related to food preparation (e.g., cooking pots and kraters) were primarily Levantine in style. Mario Martin, who studied the locally produced Egyptian ceramic assemblage, prefers the simplified stratigraphy, allowing him to identify a potter's workshop producing wares like those typifying the thirteenth to twelfth centuries in Egypt and Canaan.⁶⁷ It is, however, striking, that in either scheme, the kilns at Deir el-Balah were producing both “Egyptian” and “Canaanite” pottery at the same time.

The cemetery adjacent to the site had a long history of looting, at the behest of Israel's Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, prior to the first methodic excavations conducted in 1972. Originally occupying 3 hectares, the cemetery must have contained hundreds of tombs – the majority simple pit graves, sometimes stepped or recessed – of which about fifty contained anthropoid sarcophagi. Most of these sarcophagi have reached the Israel Museum by way of the Dayan collection, but a handful were excavated by the Dothan expedition and described in detail.⁶⁸ There are several salient features in this cemetery that

are difficult to harmonize, either with each other or with the excavated settlement. First, although we have no complete demographic profile, the cemetery contained the bones of men, women and children, and is distant from what one would expect from a military or administrative center. Rather, it seems to have served a village or urban community. Second, the excavated anthropoid coffins all contained the remains of more than one person; sometimes these were complete skeletons, but there were also isolated bones. Since the friable coffins could not have withstood repeated covering and uncovering, opening and closing, without revealing traces of such activity, we must assume that there was some kind of charnel-house, where manipulation of the dead could be effected prior to burial. The provision of drainage holes in all the coffins supports this possibility, as it facilitates the collection of fluids during decomposition. Third, there are scarcely any duplicates among the fifty-odd coffins in the collection. Each was a unique, labor-intensive creation, which included not only the creation and successful firing of the large, heavy containers, but the careful modeling and molding of the features – whether “grotesque” or “naturalistic” – the separate firing of the lid and, finally, the painting-in of additional details. The knowledge involved must have been beyond the capacity of the journeymen potters seconded to the Egyptian expeditions to the Levant, so we must imagine the existence of itinerant coffin-makers, working on commission and making two or three coffins at a time. Last, anthropoid coffins were often endowed with valuable burial gifts, both inside the coffin – jewelry, bronze serving vessels, rings and seals – and around it – jars and imported containers that most likely contained precious liquids. Each coffin thus embodied or codified a complex and temporally extended series of actions that included the preparation and hoarding of bodies and material goods, ritual performances and acts of conspicuous consumption carried out by the principals before their death and/or by their next of kin after death. These actions appear to advertise an affinity with “Egypt,” but whether the families that carried them out were, in fact, *from* Egypt, must remain a moot point.⁶⁹

Deir el-Balah, a site unnamed in contemporary texts and hence flying under the historical radar, seems to have originated as a regional cemetery, serving the people who conducted Egypt’s business in Canaan under the Nineteenth Dynasty, and then evolved into an administrative station. Its material culture and the distinctions evident in the status of its inhabitants (on decease) point to a considerable indigenous population serving a thin stratum of officials who presented themselves as Egyptian.

An Interim Summary

The three most prominent excavated sites associated with Egyptian imperial control in Canaan reveal that until the thirteenth century BCE, the

archaeological footprint of the Egyptian administration was extremely light. Beyond the evidence for local production of Egyptian pots, beginning in the late fifteenth century, which can be associated with Egyptian military and/or administrative logistics, there is no certain architectural or other evidence for a fixed Egyptian presence (with the possible, but still largely conjectural, exception of Jaffa). This does not rule out regular visits by “circuit officials,” as pointed out by numerous scholars,⁷⁰ and certainly does not rule out the promotion of Egyptian interest, including the imposition of taxes or tribute, by means of proxies (i.e., local ruling families). But archaeological evidence for this is not forthcoming.

The advent of the Nineteenth Dynasty in Egypt is marked by archaeologically visible changes in the Levant. These began with military campaigns and the installation of territorial markers, including the royal stelae at Bet She'an (to which we may add stelae of Seti I at Tyre and at Tell esh-Shihab in southern Syria, and of Ramesses II at Byblos and Nahr el-Kalb in Lebanon, and at Sheikh Sa'ad and at-Tura in northern Jordan),⁷¹ and soon escalated to a major reorganization of the small Levantine settlement at Bet Shean and the installation of several administrative structures and their personnel, many of whom eventually became integrated in the Levantine milieu. The increased military traffic between Egypt and Canaan and the logistics associated with it are probably responsible for the establishment of way-stations and associated cemeteries in southern Canaan, like those of Deir el-Balah, in which local people rubbed shoulders with Egyptian officials and adopted a peculiar, creolized mortuary culture.

It should be kept in mind, however, that the instances described so far represent the most evolved examples of Egyptian involvement in Canaan, and that other sites display evidence for localized interaction, for limited cultural interference or for barely any impact at all.

More on the Fourteenth Century

Understanding the archaeological nature of fourteenth-century interaction with Egypt is obviously crucial to historical interpretations of the period represented by the Tell el-Amarna archive, but how may this be achieved without recourse to the texts themselves? A good place to judge the nature of the interaction would be a site that has produced its own archaeological evidence for Amarna-age interaction with Egypt – ancient Kumidi, or Kamid el-Loz. Eight letters belonging to the genre of the Amarna correspondence are attributed to the site (six were found in the excavations), which is widely considered to have been the seat, for a time, of one or more Egyptian officials.⁷² Excavations ongoing since 1963 (with a fifteen-year break in the wake of the Lebanese wars, which caused massive damage to the site) have uncovered extensive tracts of the LBA town, including a palace, a princely

tomb and a temple. The principal published finds come from the tomb (dubbed the “Treasury”), which appears to date to the mid-fifteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries, and from the LBA temple, which covers most of the LBA occupation at the site.

Kamid el-Loz was a small, unpretentious local center in the southern Bīqā‘. The structure identified as a royal tomb is a stone-built, partly subterranean chamber, 8 × 10 meters, introduced into the palace between its first and second phase of use (Figure 6.6).⁷³ It comprises two 3 × 3 meter rooms accessed by a narrow corridor to their west; the northern room contained the skeleton of a young girl, and the southern room, the skeleton of another child and an adult male. Hundreds of valuable objects were found strewn across both rooms and the corridor, in a state of disarray that testified to an episode of severe destruction and collapse. The contents, however, seem not to have been removed, and the structure was renovated and incorporated in the later phases of the palace, serving more mundane functions. The list of objects in the Kamid el-Loz “Treasury” reads like a catalogue of a late second-millennium cabinet of curiosities (Figure 6.6)⁷⁴: vases made of exotic stone, ivory animal-shaped and anthropomorphic containers, filigree gold jewelry, a scale-armor vest and bronze weapons, colored glass vessels, a decorated ivory box set of two different board games, a terracotta model chariot with horses and rider, scarabs and rings, and dozens of ceramic vessels of local, Cypriot, Egyptian and Minoan origin. While a superficial glance seems to recognize many of the precious objects as Egyptian, detailed study has shown that most may be assigned to Levantine craft tradition that absorbed Egyptian models and motifs.⁷⁵ Some, however, certainly originated in Egypt, including a stone vase inscribed with a dedication to “the mayor Ra-user,” which might have been the Egyptian name of the local ruler. Thus, these objects belonged to a Levantine currency of valuable craft items – manufactured in Egypt and across the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard – that could be exchanged between Egyptian officials and the palace-dwelling Levantine elites, and among those elites, in the course of reciprocal gift-giving and diplomacy. Egyptian involvement in these low-level exchanges seems quite likely: Why else would this minor center have possessed such unique treasures, if not as a form of payment for its service to the empire, and what better way to grease the wheels of Egyptian diplomacy than the provision of fine craft items or the raw materials (such as gold or ivory) required to produce them?

The LBA temple at Kamid el-Loz, a structure that evolved from a single, non-formal three-room structure to a simply built double temple with some structural affinities to the Levantine “popular” temples, provides a rich yield of votive objects.⁷⁶ There is a large contingent of bronze statuettes and silver-leaf cutouts in the MBA tradition of the northern Levant, as well as later collections of simple jewelry, faience bowls, cylinder seals and scarabs. Offering-bowls, model shrines, jars and stands make up the bulk of the ceramic corpus

(including a number of Egyptian bowls and jars), but there are some unusual pieces, including Mycenaean chalices, piriform jars and libation vessels. The collection, as a whole, is far less refined than that found in the palace, and seems to reflect more popular gift-offerings, made over an extended period. The presence of Egyptian objects is consistent with the respect shown to local cult centers at sites like Bet Shean (and also Lachish and possibly Hazor; see below), and may well have been part of Egypt's policy of engaging (or appeasing?) the local populace.

Neither of these contexts, which played central roles in the provincial 5-hectare town, evince any obvious hint of the prolonged presence of a high-ranking Egyptian governor and his entourage, or of any standing administrative apparatus. Evidently, the fourteenth-century hands-off policy applied even to places occupied for a time by the Egyptian circuit-officials, and whatever diplomatic or economic benefits coveted by the imperial court could be obtained through the manipulation of Levantine elites, and through the provision of preciosities that fall below the bar required to merit mention in texts.

More on the Thirteenth to Twelfth Centuries

Successful identification of locally produced Egyptian ceramic repertoires of the thirteenth to twelfth centuries has allowed scholars to identify several sites as possible locations of imperial Egyptian activity. These include about half a dozen large, isolated structures⁷⁷ and at least two adjacent cemeteries. The fact that the interpretation of the only one of these structures to have been fully excavated and reported – that at Tel Afeq – is fraught with ambiguity does not inspire confidence in the identification of the others, for which details are sometimes sketchy. Moreover, there are large, square, isolated LBA structures in other locations, which are not designated as Egyptian. Nonetheless, the strong Egyptian cultural coloring of several sites merits their description here.

Tell el-Far'ah (South) and Tell es-Sa'idiya. A large, probably multistoried LBA structure built on top of the late MBA ramparts at southern Tell el-Far'ah⁷⁸ – one of the four southern plains sites excavated by W.F. Petrie (with Tell el-'Ajjul, Tell el-Hesi and Tell Jemmeh) – has been identified as a “governor's residence” or as an administrative center with close Egyptian associations, on the strength of its ground plan, which has been compared to Egyptian central-hall houses; its construction, of mudbrick walls without stone foundation; and its finds, which include a pithos bearing the royal name of Seti II and ivory panels belonging to a bed or chair that depict a ruler participating in a funerary banquet.⁷⁹ Two fragments of bowls inscribed in Egyptian hieratic characters belong to a group of votive bowls found in southern Canaan that document tax payments in kind to temples, either in Canaan or in Egypt (similar bowls, or fragments, were found in Deir el-Balah, Lachish, Tell esh-Sharia', Qubur el-Walaydah and Tel Haror).⁸⁰ Although the precise function of the building

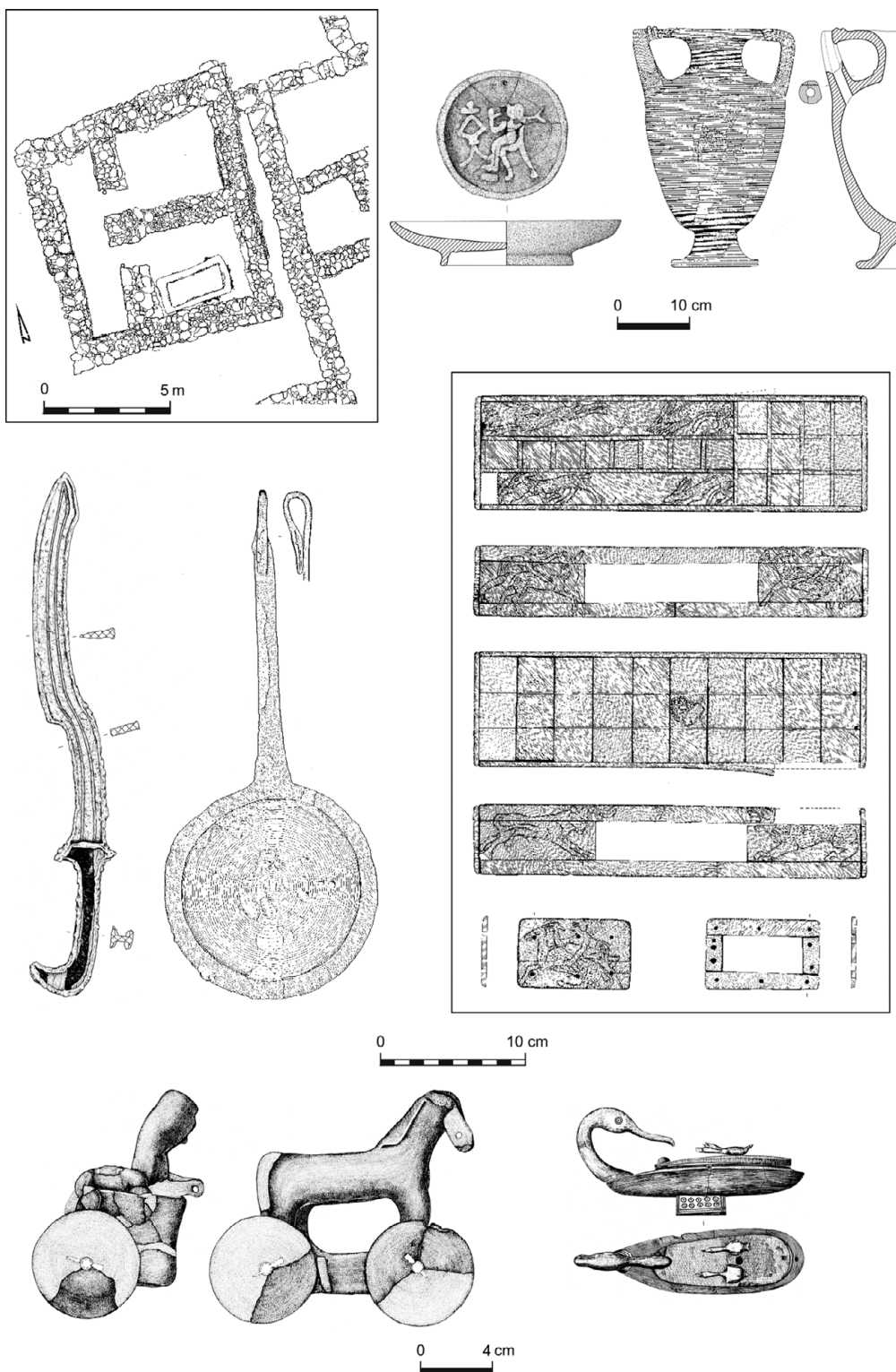


Figure 6.6 The Kamid el Loz “Treasury”: plan and selected finds – stone bowl and amphora, bronze sword and fire-pan, inlaid game-box, terracotta chariot model and duck-shaped ivory cosmetic vessel. After Miron 1990: pls. 11, 12, 22, 27, 40, 46, 55. Reproduced by permission of S. Hornung.

is obscured by the absence of reliable information on its contents, the finds link this structure to the intensification of Egyptian activity in southern Canaan under the Ramessides.

Surrounding the site was a large, multiperiod cemetery, originating in the MBA, with many graves dated to the LB IIB and TBI periods.⁸¹ As at Deir el-Balah, about 15 kilometers to the northwest of Far'ah, most of the graves were simple pit graves with a single burial, while a few were richer burials testifying to status differences. Unlike Deir el-Balah, the high-end tombs, with the greatest number and variety of finds, were rock-cut chamber tombs, approached by way of a corridor, and often furnished with broad shelves to accommodate a number of primary interments. Among the finds in these tombs were parts of two anthropoid coffins. The graves contained remains of adults and subadults, and so represented, as at Deir el-Balah, a normal settlement population. While all tombs contained objects of the traditional Levantine repertoire, and a few had Cypriot and Aegean imports, the assemblage of Egyptian objects is the defining feature of this cemetery. It includes locally made ceramics found in most tombs, and many amulets, pendants and scarabs of Egyptian workmanship (Figure 6.7). Braunstein's analysis revealed a correlation between apotropaic amulets and scarabs – especially of Bes and Pataikos, who are associated with childbirth – and subadult graves, and between royal name scarabs and the high-status chamber tombs. The Far'ah cemetery thus fuses a local tradition – the continued use of the MBA cemetery and of Levantine burial practices – with Egyptian popular beliefs and markers of status, in a manner that – to some extent – continues and intensifies modes of practice that existed in previous periods, when this part of the southern Levant was in close contact with lower Egypt.

The same cannot be said of Tell es-Sa'idiya in the eastern Jordan Valley, which joins Tel Bet Shean (about 25 kilometers to its north) as a clear implant of Egyptian interest and activity in a region that traditionally had been somewhat insulated from the coastal area. Like Tell el-Far'ah (South),

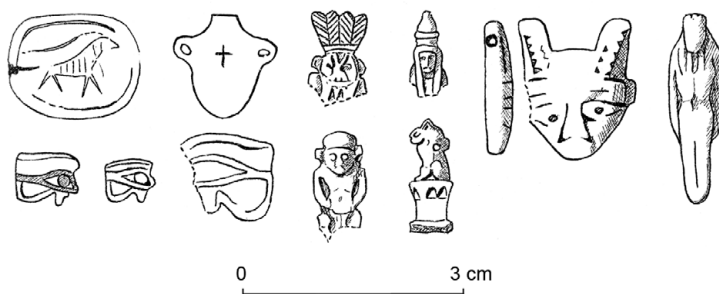


Figure 6.7 Egyptian knickknacks from the Tell el-Far'ah cemetery. After Petrie 1930: pl. 35.

excavations at Tell es-Sa'idiya have revealed a structure defined as a palace or residency on the high mound, and a rich cemetery below it. Little can be said about the residency, as details remain sketchy.⁸² The cemetery has been studied and described at greater length by the excavators and in several studies by Jack Green.⁸³ Period I burials, according to Green's scheme, cover the LB IIB and TBI. These include fifty-eight pit burials, three lined cist burials, eight double pithos burials and five jar burials. The pit burials were arranged in rows or in clusters, interspersed with the larger and richer cist tombs. The demographic profile shows subadult and adult, male and female burials. Based on quantity and quality of finds, cist burials represent the highest ascribed status. They typically included large quantities of Egyptian-style serving bowls and a few Egyptian jars, bronze wine-sets, precious metal jewelry, and Egyptian pendants and seals. In two tombs, bitumen had been poured over or applied to the corpses in an apparent attempt to preserve them. Other tombs showed traces of linen shrouds. These practices are considered to refer to Egyptian embalming practices. A peculiarity of this cemetery (reproduced at a handful of sites on either side of the Jordan) is the use of double pithos burials (Figure 6.8), that is, the interment of adults in parts of two large jars (typically, collared-rim pithoi). Much has been made of the "foreign" origin of this burial type, but in the context of the Sa'idiya cemetery, with its strong links to Egyptian practice, the double pithoi could be a reference to the ceramic coffin, common at nearby Bet Shean but apparently unavailable to the residents of this site. Burial in clay containers has a very long pedigree in the Levant, and the people of this Jordan Valley site would have been familiar with the symbolic resonance of clay, birth, death and regeneration.

Afeq: Residency, Estate, or Waystation? When last heard from, Afeq (Aphek), the strategically located mound at the headwaters of the Yarkon River, was the seat of an MB II manorial estate, represented by the sturdy remains of "Palace III" and its renovated successor, "Palace IV." Following the virtual

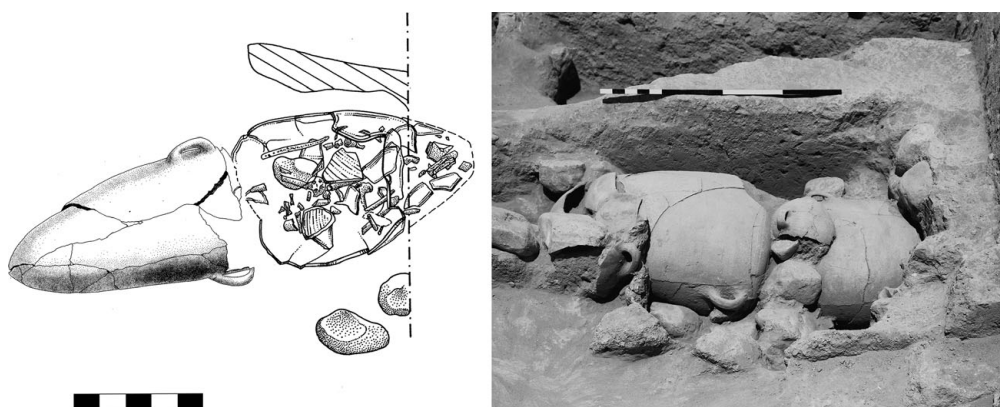


Figure 6.8 A pithos burial at Tell es-Sa'idiya. Courtesy of J. Tubb and J. Green.

abandonment of the site in the sixteenth century, settlement was renewed in late LB I, with remains of a possibly ritual nature attributed to this phase.⁸⁴ A poorly preserved but impressively paved tripartite building of the LB IIA, with a double colonnade across its façade, comprises “Palace V,” but this was soon superseded by the thirteenth-century “Palace VI,” yet another of the presumed “residences” attributed to the Egyptian administration (for the general site plan, see Chapter 5, Figure 5.9). Like the other “residences,” the Afeq structure is a sturdy, square (18 × 18 meter) two-storied structure. Unlike them, it has massive stone foundations, no central court or hall, and stone-paved interior rooms and external courtyard. Also unlike the other “residences,” this building was destroyed in the late thirteenth century and never rebuilt, leaving its thick destruction level relatively intact and providing a snapshot of the cultural and political cross-currents in Canaan of Nineteenth Dynasty times. The ground floor of the Afeq building has a paved entrance hall leading, on one side, to a stairway and, on the other, to two small paved chambers and two larger rooms that appear to have been used to store grain in bulk. Most of the finds from the structure come from its collapsed second story and from the surrounding courtyard. The finds directly associated with the structure included a few storage jars from the ground floor and several vessels associated with the consumption of food and beverages from the second floor: locally made Levantine and Egyptian-style bowls, cups and jugs, as well as a Mycenaean stirrup-jar and other fragments of Aegean-type vessels. Outside the building, by its entrance, there was a cache of Egyptian bowls and local cooking and mixing vessels. No stone processors appear to have been associated with this structure, nor any traces of cooking installations. About 40 meters to the west of the building, a plastered winepress was excavated, and charred remains of grape must were found next to the northern wall of the building, suggesting that wine was produced for consumption by its occupants.

Afeq’s claim to fame is the unique collection of inscribed objects found in the second-story debris, including eight cuneiform tablets, two inscribed Egyptian objects and a Hittite sealing. The cuneiform tablets include fragments of lexical and administrative texts, as well as a complete, locally produced copy of a letter supposed to have been sent from an official in Ugarit to the Egyptian governor of Canaan, dealing with a shipment of grain and the expected remuneration for its dispatch.⁸⁵ In a recent reevaluation of this text, Na’aman and Goren suggest that it was a model letter, used in the instruction of scribes.⁸⁶ Indeed, the entire collection of texts could represent the remnants of the kit of an itinerant scribe, who may have spent some time in Afeq before moving on to his next destination.

The Afeq building defies easy categorization. The excavators viewed the inscribed material as adequate evidence for the classification of the structure as a governor’s residence. Y. Gadot, who published the final report on the structure, doubts the need for an administrative center so near the main

Egyptian base at Jaffa, and instead suggested that it was the seat of a small Egyptian estate, noting that

[the building] functioned as a centre for collecting, storing and shipping agricultural surplus and for the production of secondary products, among them choice goods. It also served for housing influential figures such as a scribe, a vintner and possibly a governor on the road. Other people living or at least working at the site included a potter, possibly the soldiers of an army unit and a group of workers toiling in the fields and at the production centre.⁸⁷

This seems to be a plausible scenario, with the caveat that the absence of food-processing installations in or near the structure point to a service function, as a station or outpost, rather than a manor house. Nor is it clear who built and maintained the structure, since the sites strongly associated with the Egyptian administration show increased investment through the first half of the twelfth century, whereas Afeq was abandoned by 1200 BCE.

Tell esh-Sharia' (Sera') and Tel Mor. Our review of putative Egyptian administrative structures concludes with two sites of the southern coast and plain, Tel Mor and Tell esh-Sharia'. Tel Mor was subjected to a hurried salvage excavation in 1959–1960 and only recently published.⁸⁸ The small site, situated on the Mediterranean coast about 20 kilometers north of Ashqelon, seems to have housed massive, mudbrick administrative structures in four successive strata (IX–VI), all attributed to the LBA. The three latter strata are those that concern us: Strata VIII–VII (thirteenth-century BCE), two phases of a square, buttressed building, 22 × 22 meters, at least two stories high, subdivided at ground level into nine chambers, presumably for storage, and Stratum VI (twelfth-century BCE), a massive tower, at least 13 × 13 meters, with three small internal rooms. There are few details to report on these structures, except for the fact that both the earlier and the later buildings produced significant quantities of Egyptian bowls, as well as beer jars and even one cooking vessel, along with the standard Levantine repertoire and imported Cypriot wares (in the earlier phase).

At Tell esh-Sharia', in the northern Negev, Oren excavated about half of a 22 × 22 meter two-storied building, Building 906 (Stratum IX), destroyed in a conflagration.⁸⁹ The rich ceramic repertoire, described only in preliminary fashion, included significant quantities of Egyptian locally made and imported vessels – in a matrix of richly decorated Levantine wares that seem to indicate ceremonial activity in the building – as well as standard cooking and storage vessels. Fragments of several votive Egyptian bowls found in the building carried hieratic inscriptions that record donations or taxes collected on behalf of a temple institution. One inscription noted a regnal year of 20 + x (unpreserved), which should almost certainly be attributed to Ramesses III (1186–1155 BCE).⁹⁰

An Egyptian Excursus: The Timna Copper Mines

The copper ores of Timna, in the southern Arabah Valley, were exploited as early as the Chalcolithic period, and in various periods thereafter (see Chapter 2). Excavations conducted since the 1960s by Rothenberg, Ben-Yosef, Erickson-Gini and Avner revealed intensive use of the mines from the Late Bronze IIB to the Iron IIA periods.⁹¹ Opinions on the extent and intensity of the Egyptian endeavor are divided, with Ben-Yosef and Avner taking a minimizing stance, and Yekutieli and Cohen-Sasson supporting Rothenberg's maximizing position.⁹²

The undisputed Egyptian remains are striking: they include a shrine dedicated to the miners' patron goddess Hathor with hundreds of Egyptian votive objects of stone, faience, alabaster, glass and copper, many of them inscribed, ranging in date from the time of Seti I to that of Ramesses V, that is, from the early thirteenth to the late twelfth centuries (Figure 6.9). The peak period of activity seems to have been in the days of Ramesses III, and it was then that a rock stela, carved on the cliff that towers above the shrine, was dedicated by the royal butler Ramessesemperre, showing Ramesses III making an offering to a goddess, identified as Hathor. Ramessesemperre was a high official of Asiatic origin, who probably headed an important expedition to the site.⁹³ Rothenberg originally ascribed the Hathor shrine to the stone-built temple in which it was found, which consists of a square room, about 9.5×10 meters in size, furnished with stone basins, offering tables and rows of standing stones. The complicated stratigraphy of the structure was reinterpreted by Avner, who found that the Hathor shrine or *naos* was introduced into an extant cult structure built by the desert people who had worked the mines before the arrival of the Egyptians, and with whom the Egyptians would have contracted to continue work after their arrival. Avner thus sees the Egyptian presence in Timna as analogous to the

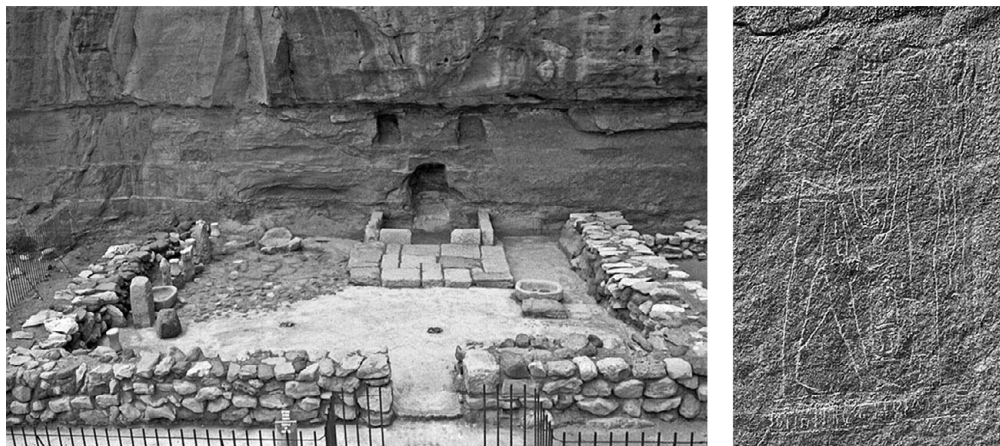


Figure 6.9 The miner's shrine at Timna and the rock stela above it, from the days of Ramesses III. Photos courtesy of U. Avner.

Egyptian presence in other parts of Canaan, where local people were contracted to serve Egyptian interests, and where local gods were respected by the Egyptians. Under this scenario, most of the actual mining would have been carried out by local people, with Egypt obtaining copper from the mines only during the brief presence of their land and sea-borne expeditions to the region.

Yekutieli and Cohen-Sasson attribute a far more tangible presence to the Egyptian mining expeditions, ascribing several production, transport and surveillance sites in the Timna Valley to a highly organized system of resource extraction (which would have utilized local knowledge and manpower). Site 2, with its LBA radiocarbon dates, as well as a recently reinterpreted rock-carved hunting scene, involving armed soldiers and charioteers, are cited in support of this reconstruction.⁹⁴

Whether viewed as a series of isolated visits or a long-term program of resource extraction, the renewed Egyptian interest in Arabah copper may be linked to thirteenth-century changes in the Mediterranean trade network, which may have left Egypt threatened with a shortage of Cypriot copper.

Conclusion: The Trajectory of Egypt in the Levant

The seeming discrepancy between the ample textual evidence for Egyptian campaigning and political control over much of the Levant in the first half of the LBA and the archaeological “facts on the ground” point to the fundamental disconformity between the two types of evidence: archaeology can testify, with far greater reliability, to habitual, repeated and cumulative actions that impact the material record than to the events and short-term tactics commemorated in contemporary texts. Taken at this level, the archaeology of the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries points to an absence of permanent places of Egyptian presence, construction, administration or cultic activity. The mid-thirteenth- to mid-twelfth-century Egyptian “surge” seen at Bet Shean and Deir el-Balah, which begins with a symbolic military/propaganda attack (swift raids and the erection of stelae) and then quickly mutates into a quasi-colonial manifestation, is replicated at several other sites along the southern coast, in the southern plains and in the Jordan Valley, though perhaps not at the same intensity. Together, these sites portray, on the one hand, an attempt by the imperial power to secure strategic routes and sources of revenue and logistic support for campaigning armies and, on the other, the readiness of local groups to serve the imperial apparatus and maintain the flexible cultural identity that had characterized at least the southern regions since the late MBA, when Hyksos interaction with Canaan had been a matter of course. Indeed, the eclectic and opportunistic nature of the New Kingdom imperial project, coupled with the physical and cultural mobility that characterized the LBA Eastern Mediterranean seaboard, seems to have encouraged the breaking-down of rigid identities, even as a long tradition of formal propaganda appeared to advocate ethnic stereotyping, with its conventional depictions of “Asiatics,” “Libyans” or “Sea Peoples.”⁹⁵ Here

too, the multivocal nature of the archaeological evidence serves as an antidote to simplified views of cultural interaction.

Outside the sites directly in Egypt's path, however, there was little traction for Egyptian political or religious mores, and following Egypt's political and military withdrawal, virtually nothing remained except for the diffuse stylistic conventions that had long taken root in the Levant.

Frequent destructions reported at virtually every excavated LBA site point to a constant background noise of violence, hardly encountered in earlier eras. This serves as a reminder that the political balance in Canaan was maintained by means of a thoroughly asymmetrical political structure, seen archaeologically in the stark disparities between estate/palace-dwellers and the urban populace, as well as in the archaeological disappearance – in the hill country, the arid margins and even in areas between the major towns – of those left out of the political equation. The Egyptian strategy appears to have been based on piggybacking on the pre-existing political economy of the LBA Levant, as it evolved in the aftermath of MBA collapse, and it is to the archaeological expressions of that political economy that we will now turn.

THE LB II PRESTIGE ECONOMY

When last heard from, the LB I south Levantine polities, whether integrated into the Egyptian system of political control and surveillance or not, survived the depopulation of the rural agrarian sector by reducing their dependence on staple products and maintaining their leverage in the countryside through participation in commemorative and ritual sanctification of the landscape. By sponsoring great temples in towns or regional shrines outside them (in addition to archaeologically invisible forms of interaction), town- or mountain-dwelling elites could maintain communication with the marginalized groups outside the towns and protect the routes and nodes that were vital to their own network of mutual interaction, exchange and commerce. As long as populations remained small, and the broad political framework both stable and conducive to social stasis, the fundamentally asymmetrical and underproductive LBA regime could be maintained and survive localized outbursts of violence, recorded in recurrent destruction layers at most sites or the movement of people and armies through the countryside. The building blocks of the south Levantine LB II – palaces and elite dwellings, urban quarters and cult structures inside and outside town limits, and coastal ports of trade – reveal the disparities between the depleted infrastructure and the occasional expressions of symbolic and material wealth that permitted elites to survive and thrive.

Hazor and Its Temples

An exquisite bronze plaque from Stratum 2 of Temple H in the lower city of Hazor (LB I) shows the figure of a Levantine ruler, wrapped in a woolen fringed



Figure 6.10 Left, a bronze plaque from LB I Hazor depicting a local dignitary; right, the LB II statue of the reigning storm-god Ba'al, found in the acropolis ceremonial complex. Photos courtesy of the Selz Foundation Hazor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

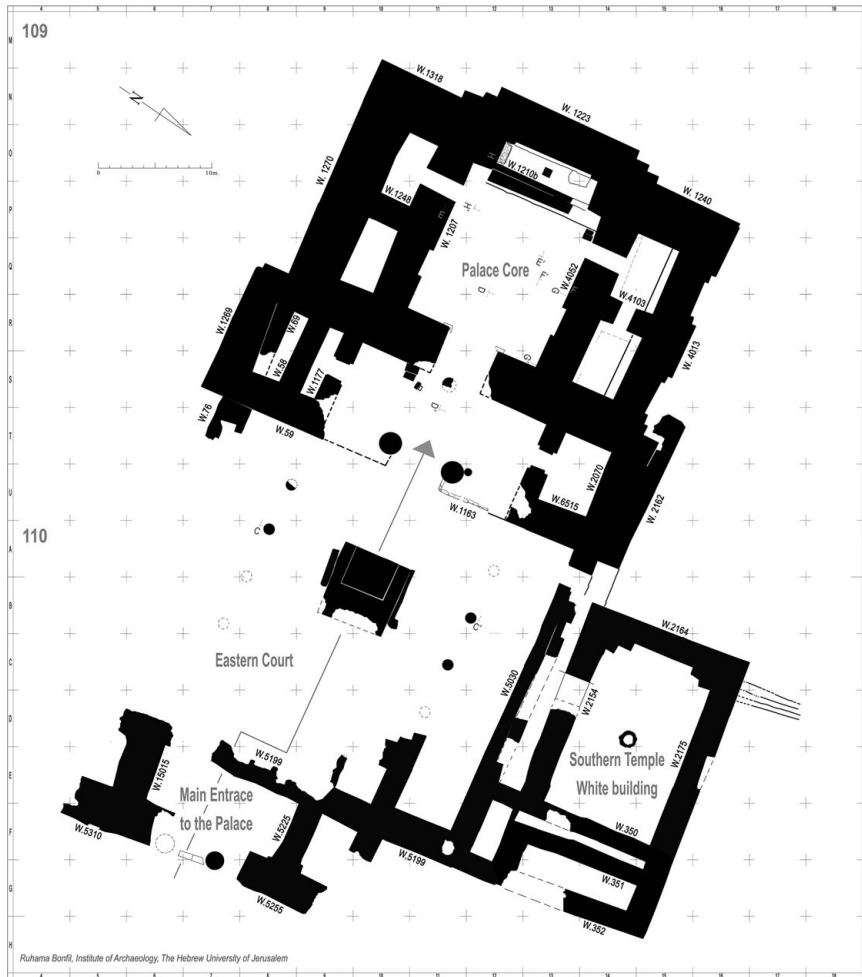
garment and shawl, his hand raised in a gesture of greeting (Figure 6.10, left);⁹⁶ the gilt-bronze statue of a seated king wearing similar attire and a conical hat was found deposited beneath the floor of the Late Bronze II “ceremonial palace” on the acropolis of Hazor.⁹⁷ Both figures represent Middle Bronze Age kings, their attire and serene pose indicative of their role as just and reliable shepherds, protecting their flock, and resonating with the pastoral genealogy shared by “Amorite” rulers of the MBA. Their continued use in LBA ritual contexts doubtless served “to satisfy political needs of later monarchs by evoking a real or imagined memory of the past,”⁹⁸ underlining the seeming continuity evinced at LBA Hazor, in relation to the other, crisis-ridden south Levantine towns. Indeed, Hazor stood in a league of its own. It had survived the late MBA settlement crunch intact – perhaps because it had already absorbed most of the nearby villages into its fortified lower city and therefore had enough demographic clout to create its own agricultural surplus. It also maintained the principal secular and religious institutions that had formed the backbone of the MBA city-state – the temple and palace complex on the acropolis, and the sacred axis crossing the city from south to north (see Chapter 5). There were, however, several changes in the transition to the LBA that suggest a shift in the internal balance of power – a shift favoring the ruling elite on the city acropolis and distancing it from the residents of the lower town.

Two massive building projects, undertaken apparently at the beginning of the fourteenth century, mark this shift.⁹⁹ On the acropolis itself, the precinct that had formerly combined the popular ancestor cult and the restricted formal temple-cult was carefully but thoroughly covered over and refashioned as an enormous royal-ceremonial precinct (Figure 6.11). This precinct,

dubbed a “ceremonial palace” or “temple” by the Ben-Tor expedition, comprised a colonnaded courtyard approached through a guarded entrance on the east; a monumental entrance porch, with two massive columns (1.5 meters in diameter) framing the only entrance to the hall; a large hall (Building 7050) flanked by symmetrical service chambers to its north and south; and a walled-off niche to the west. The whole complex (excluding the southern temple, which was renovated and incorporated in the new scheme) measures about 70 × 40 meters. The large colonnaded courtyard, which had a massive stone podium or altar directly opposite the entrance to the main hall, contained many thousands of mammal bones, interpreted as the remains of ritual feasts or sacrifices.¹⁰⁰ The walls of the main structure, 4–5 meters thick, must have towered to a considerable height. The hall and much of the northern external façade were lined with large, fine basalt orthostats, and huge quantities of cedar wood were encountered in the debris of the ferocious fire that consumed the contents of the building and fired its mudbricks a bright red. Among the great quantities of finds in this building are the huge pithoi found in a room flanking the entrance porch; numerous offering bowls, stands, chalices and preparation vessels found off the main hall; terracotta model shrines; a faience lion-headed cup; dozens of cylinder seals (most in the Mitannian style); and the ivory panels, in quasi-Egyptian style, of a complete jewelry box and parts of several others, all presumably made in a Levantine, perhaps local, palace workshop. Bronze and stone sculpture includes the large bronze statue of the seated king (mentioned above) and another large, unique statue of the reigning Ba‘al, wearing a tunic, sandals and a hat decorated with the iconic Canaanite ibex and palm-tree motif (Figure 6.10, right); a monolithic basalt basin composed of a mantled figure grasping a large tripod krater decorated with a running spiral; a lion-shaped orthostat; and several fragments of fine Egyptian stone sculptures, all quite ancient in their LBA context.¹⁰¹ About fifty additional silver and bronze plaques and figurines – anthropomorphic and zoomorphic – are associated with the acropolis structure,¹⁰² making Hazor one of the chief craft centers of the Levant.

On the slope beneath the acropolis complex, which surely dominated the entire town, the outline of another major structure – possibly another palace – has begun to emerge (Area M). It was approached from a podium complex built of basalt ashlar, which was itself part of a processional stairway leading from the lower to the upper city. Here, midway up the slope, storage rooms containing grain-filled pithoi, all burnt in the final destruction of the town, hint to the accumulation of staple goods by the rulers of Hazor in a building that awaits excavation.

Area C, in the lower town, offers a striking contrast to the Area A/M acropolis.¹⁰³ Following a late MB destruction, the area was only truly rebuilt in LB II (Stratum 1b of the lower city). Replacing the earlier domestic quarter were several structures – including pottery workshops and possible living quarters – huddled in front of – and blocking from view – a small shrine cut into the



inside slope of Hazor's western rampart (Figure 6.12). Finds in the workshop area included large quantities of bowls and chalices, several pithoi, and cult objects such as a terracotta mask and a silver-plated bronze standard showing several crudely executed motifs that include snakes, a crescent and a face. The shrine itself was a broad-room hall (about 4.5×6 meters), entered from the east and furnished with a niche on the opposite wall. Ten stelae – all aniconic, save for a single, central stela showing a pair of outstretched arms in supplication of a crescent moon – stood on a podium across the back of the niche, accompanied by the statue of a seated male, a roughly cut offering table, several fragmentary stelae and three schematic sculptures, interpreted by Beck as representations of ancestral spirits.¹⁰⁴ As noted by Beck, the ensemble immediately brings to mind the rows of stelae from village shrines in the Jordan Valley (Hayyat and Kitan), but more immediately, it almost certainly represents a relocation of the ancestor cult that had been situated, until LB I, on the acropolis (the MBA “field of stelae” adjoining the palace complex). Thus, the stela shrine of Area C at Hazor appears to signal the demotion of the shared ancestors of Middle Bronze Age Hazor and their relegation to the back slope of a lower city craft quarter, where they certainly continued to be venerated by the people of the city. Yadin and Zuckerman mention an additional possible stela installation near the north-eastern gate of the lower city (Area K).

In Area H, the dominant northern temple of LB I continued to function in LB II as the chief temple of the lower city (Figure 6.12). The mid-LB I rebuild brought the temple complex to its most developed form. The main structure maintained its MBA plan, but the court in front of it was formalized, with an interior court approached by way of an entrance structure (later emulated in the palace-temple). This interior court provided evidence for a variety of cult-related activities, including an altar with remains of animal sacrifices and a potter's kiln, in which twenty votive bowls were discovered. Finds associated with this phase include the bronze plaque mentioned above, bronze female figurines and an inscribed clay liver-model, used in divination. Yadin notes the typical LB I imported ceramics associated with this phase.¹⁰⁵ He also suggests that the orthostats (and some of the cult paraphernalia) found in the Stratum 1 rebuild of this temple originated in the LB I temple of Stratum 2, thus marking LB I as the high point in its long history.

In LB II (Stratum 1b-a), the temple was rebuilt and converted into an unusual tripartite structure, with an entrance porch, a middle hall that incorporated the previous entrance towers, and an innermost broad room that is virtually identical to the previous cella, its walls lined with basalt orthostats that must have been dismantled from the earlier temple.¹⁰⁶ The courtyard structures that fronted the earlier version of the temple were first altered, and then covered over, but there was evidence of much extramural activity that caused a buildup of the remains of informal cultic activity, including bowls, cooking pots and incense stands, with abundant animal bones associated with them.¹⁰⁷

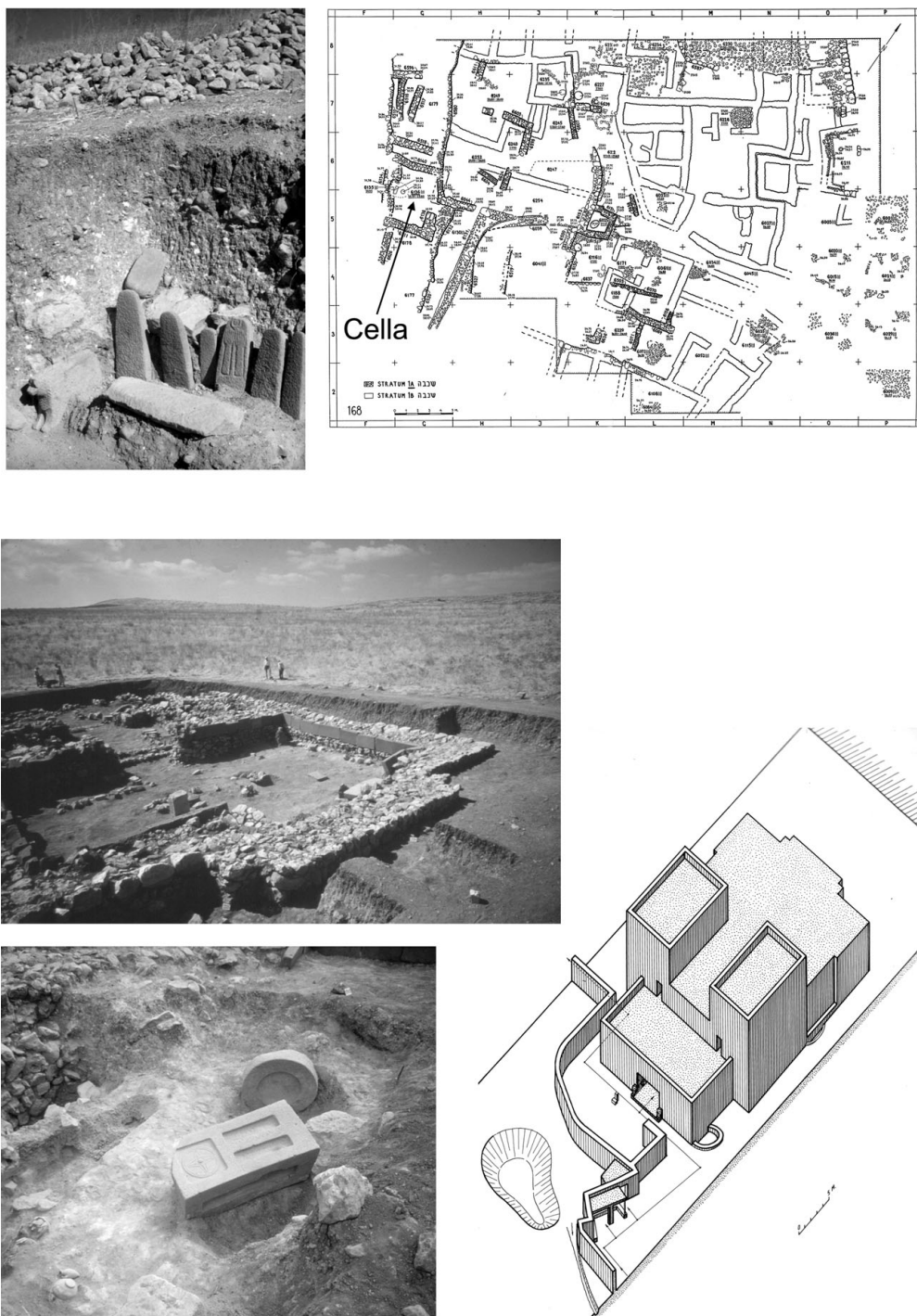


Figure 6.12 Hazor: above, Area C shrine and general plan, showing its location at the rear of the domestic quarter; below, general view of the Area H tower temple (looking southwest), detail of offering table and reconstruction. Photos courtesy of the Selz Foundation Hazor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Plan and reconstruction after Yadin et al. 1960: pl. 209, Yadin et al. 1989: fig. 5.

The objects within the structure, primarily in its inner sanctum, testify to the intensive cultic activity inside the building as well. The collection of cultic objects from the late LB II phase of the Area H temple is reminiscent in its general quality and in its details of that of the acropolis palace-temple, except that it is not as rich in small finds, probably because it was abandoned sooner or perhaps was more accessible to scavengers. Ceramic finds, especially in the penultimate building phase, included many bowls, chalices, incense stands and other ritual vessels. The outstanding objects from the later phase include carved basalt libation and offering tables, a decorated basalt krater, a basalt incense altar carved in deep relief with a pair of stylized arms below a four-rayed disc, a bronze bull figurine, and the torso of a deity astride a bull, associated by Yadin with the local storm god. As shown by Zuckerman, feasting would have been the main ritual activity within the temple compound.¹⁰⁸

There seems to be a degree of iconographic slippage in the Hazor temple statuary: the four-pointed star of the Area H temple also appears on the breast of the figure that embraces the ceremonial basalt basin in the acropolis palace-temple, together with a crescent, which is featured on the only carved stela in the Area C temple. Likewise, in her description of the enthroned Ba'al from the palace-temple, Tallay Ornan notes the seeming incongruity of the ibex and palm tree fecundity motif with the male figure that it adorns. These convergences suggest that the temples of Hazor might not have been dedicated to specific deities, but represented the city and its rulers before the assembly of the gods.

The ruling dynasty of fourteenth- to thirteenth-century Hazor demonstrated its power and international prestige primarily by means of its ceremonial institutions, built on the acropolis that dominates the town from the south, and on the rampart that dominates the town from the north. Both buildings were of exceptional quality, requiring sophisticated architectural planning, imported materials such as cedar wood, and stone masons of the highest caliber. The gold- and silver-plated objects that filled these houses of gods and kings, as well as the basalt sculptures and the ivory boxes, appear to have been made by local craftsmen from Hazor or from neighboring kingdoms, well versed in the iconography of the Levant and the wider West Asian sphere. Fragments of Egyptian objects seem to be mostly relics of an earlier era, or perhaps small gifts made to the rulers of Hazor by the Egyptian circuit officials, to whom they were nominally subservient and to whom they would have owed hospitality.¹⁰⁹ The primary source of cultural and political capital in these buildings (as advertised in their style, materials and contents) is therefore Levantine/West Asian, rather than Egyptian or Mediterranean. A distant second, in terms of political prestige, is the abundance of staple products, as expressed in the large pithoi placed prominently in the vestibule of the acropolis palace/temple. Finds in the Stratum 2 temple in Area H suggest that, at one point, imported ceramics (mainly from Cyprus) had been a marker of prestige, but by the LB II

these had lost their luster, and they are virtually imperceptible in the ceremonial assemblage (although present elsewhere at Hazor in non-elite contexts, especially those related to burial).¹¹⁰ The chief avenues of palace-sponsored exchange (encompassing commerce and gift exchange) were therefore the caravan routes to the north and northeast, rather than those to the coast. It may be the case, however, that Hazor, as a member of the club of “not so Great” Levantine kings (with Alalakh, Qatna and the like),¹¹¹ had access to different sources of prestige than its lesser neighbors, to whom we will, in a moment, turn our gaze. Before doing so, however, a few words must be said about the mid-thirteenth-century decline and destruction of Hazor.

If the acropolis ceremonial center, the processional avenue (the Area M podium) leading to it, and the lower city monumental temples and gates were the vehicles of royal authority and ideology in the LBA city-state, it is those very buildings that show the clearest signs of thirteenth-century crisis, decline and, finally, destruction. In her study of the demise of LBA Hazor, Sharon Zuckerman showed that in the transition to the final phase of the city, at the start of the thirteenth century, both gates (Areas K and P) were destroyed and never rebuilt, while significant changes – characterized as “crisis architecture” and manifesting inability or lack of motivation to maintain central monuments and institutions – were made in the Area H temple and in the Area M podium.¹¹² These changes included the blockage of access to important parts of the temple and perhaps even its early termination; the dismantling of orthostats was observed in the palace-temple as well. The final destruction of Hazor, at about 1250 BCE, was marked by fierce conflagrations, but only in the surviving public buildings associated with ruling dynasty. The remaining parts of the town were abandoned, but not burnt. Zuckerman concluded thus:

It is no coincidence that the same monuments which were erected during the previous phase of the implementation of the royal strategy, and subsequently witnessed a phase of crisis architecture, were chosen as targets for destruction. There are quite a few possible explanations of this, but the two most probable ones are military conquest by foreign agents, or internal destruction as an expression of rage following a situation of economic strife and mounting social conflicts in the city. According to the latter, plausible agents of the destruction were the city dwellers who suffered the economic burdens of financing, construction and maintenance of the elite large-scale building projects.¹¹³

A victim either of internal strife emerging from the contradictions between the ruling dynasty and the townspeople, or of the power vacuum caused by the contraction of Egyptian power, Hazor made an early exit from the political scene and was not to be reinhabited before the eleventh century BCE.

Megiddo and Its Treasures

Though, as often is the case with this site, details are sketchy and difficult to come by, the social and economic pattern of Hazor was duplicated, in a smaller way, at Megiddo. The northeastern quadrant of the site was, in Strata VIII–VIIA of the LB II, largely given over to elite structures: a sprawling dual-palace complex straddling the gate area,¹¹⁴ and the massive tower temple in the sacred precinct. There was a well-built domestic quarter adjoining the sacred area on the east, but the southern quarter appears to have been composed of a warren of small and large houses in no apparent order. Virtually nothing is known of the contents of the Stratum VIII palaces, which were sturdily built, with plastered floors (one room was paved entirely with seashells!) and composed of two- or three-room suites arranged around large courtyards. A cache hidden beneath the floor of a tiny rear chamber in the palace contained an assemblage of stone cosmetic vessels, gold jewelry and accessories, along with an Egyptian “magical wand” of late Middle Kingdom date. The analogies between this assemblage and the contents of late Middle Kingdom women’s tombs in Egypt – or MBA tombs in Byblos for that matter – suggest a rather less romantic origin for the cache than one might wish for (i.e., a product of LBA tomb-robbing), but the presence of gold and ivory objects of Levantine origin, as well as two cylinder seals contemporary or slightly earlier than the palace, can place the hoard in its fourteenth-century context, as part of the world of elite gifts and counter-gifts.¹¹⁵ That the contents of the cache concern female bodily care and spiritual protection is fully in tune with textual evidence for the economy of negotiated marriages and exchanges of women between local rulers in the LBA Levant, such as the letter to the ruler of Hazor demanding that he “send the women of the young men,”¹¹⁶ or Ta’anakh letters 1 and 2, from an uncertain context at that site, which deal with arranged marriages (see box below on “Three Late Bronze Age Letters from the Levant”).¹¹⁷

In the Stratum VIIA iteration of the palace, a three-room “treasury,” reminiscent of its namesake at Kamid el-Loz, was introduced into the western wing of the palace, where it may have been intended to serve as a royal tomb. In the event, it was used to cache an extraordinary collection of some 380 ivories, originally attached to boxes and furnishings, but apparently dismantled before their arrival at this destination. A complete bovine skeleton deposited on top of the cache suggests that its burial was intentional and possibly part of a termination ritual, which seems quite likely, since the rest of the palace was virtually emptied of its contents.¹¹⁸ There is no evidence for local ivory-working at Megiddo; therefore, the assemblage should be understood as a collection.¹¹⁹ Its stylistic range, reflecting the geographic origins of its components, is extraordinary, extending from Anatolia and possibly the Aegean, through the northern Levant and down to Egypt. There are three principal categories of finds in

the cache: objects related to bodily care; panels conveying the imagery of power, designed as inlays for chairs, beds or chests; and objects devoted to leisure activities (Figure 6.13). The first category includes various types of containers – notably, duck-shaped boxes, swimming-girl spoons and a remarkable ivory casket protected by lions and female sphinxes carved in

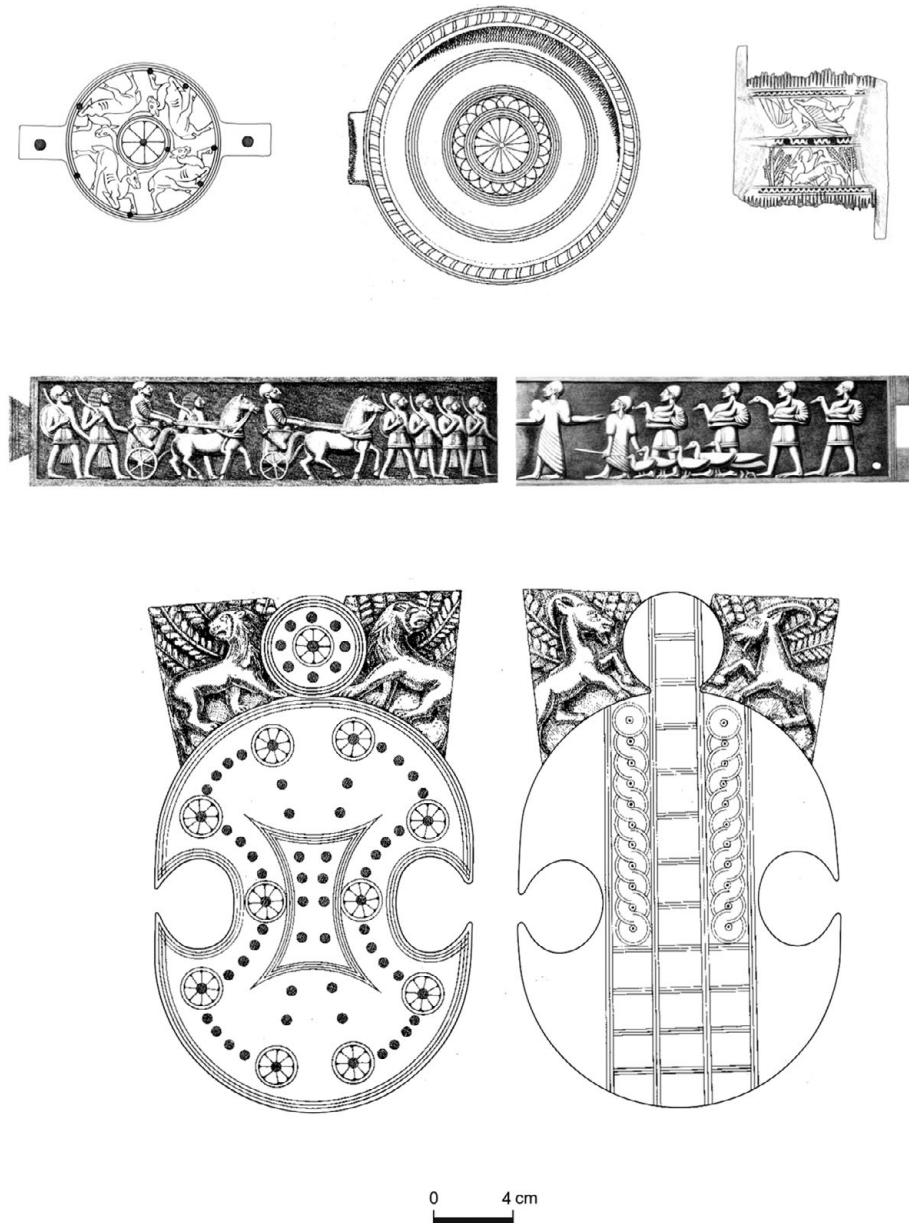


Figure 6.13 Three categories of Megiddo ivories: bodily care (top row), power (middle strips) and leisure (bottom). After Loud 1939: pls. 13, 18, 27, 32, 47. Reproduced by permission of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.

the round. The second category includes the most remarkable incised and carved panels: the “Hittite panel” that shows tiered rows of deities and mythological creatures, astride a row of bulls and topped by two winged solar discs; the armrest, in Levantine style, that shows a banqueting prince receiving captives; and the poorly preserved bed panel that shows a similar scene of a banquet celebrating a military victory. The third category includes quadrangular and figure-eight game boards, harp finials, as well as the famous model pen case bearing an inscription of a servant of Ramesses III. The three groupings in the collection comprehend three realms of activity that define and set apart the life of the palace-dwellers from those of the rest of the populace: the sensorial pleasures of bodily care, indicated by cosmetics, perfumes, delousing combs and hair ornaments; the power and prestige afforded by military force and surpluses of food; and the games and artistic pastimes afforded by leisure. This was “the language of ostentation” and the advertisement of status.¹²⁰ Regardless of the circumstances under which this collection was amassed, it reflects perfectly the moral economy of the LB II polity, echoed in the biblical condemnation of those who lounge on beds of ivory, eating fatted calves (Amos 4:6); its destruction, whether by its owners or by those who dispossessed them, reflects the fall in the value of this kind of currency in the mercantile world of the approaching Iron Age.

Three Late Bronze Age Letters from the Levant

The three letters, from Ta’anakh and Hazor, convey the tone and content of correspondence among Canaanite elites in the fifteenth to fourteenth centuries BCE. This was a time when the Levant was part of the Egyptian sphere of influence, but these letters are completely free of the self-serving and obsequious rhetoric of Canaanite correspondence with Egypt.

Taanakh I¹²¹

To Talwašur say, message of Ehli-Tešub:

Live Well. May the gods ask after your health, the health of your house (and) your sons.

You wrote to me concerning the 50 (shekels) of silver, so now I am giving over 50 (shekels) of silver: How could I not do so?

Moreover, why are you not sending (news) of your health to me?

So, whatever word that you heard from there, write to me. Moreover, if there is even a finger of zarninu-wood or myrrh, then give (them) to me.

So send back word to me concerning the young woman/junior servant Ka[..] who is in Rubuti [as t]o her well-being, and when she grows up, let him give her for ransom money, or to a husband.

Ta'anakh 2¹²²

To Talwašur say, message of Ahiami:

May the Lord God guard your life. You are a brother and beloved friend in that place.

Now, it is in your mind that I have entered into an "empty house," so give me a finger (an inch) (in regard to) two chariot wheels and a bow and 2 uppašannu, so if the bow is finished being made, then send it to me through the agency of Purdaya.

Furthermore, command your towns that they should do their work. On my head is everything which took place in regard to the cities. Now, see that I am doing you a favor.

Furthermore, if copper arrows are around, then have them given over.

Furthermore, let Elu-rapi enter into Rehov(?) and I will certainly send my man to you and I will certainly arrange a marriage.

Hazor 10¹²³

To Purutpurta say, message of Addu'apdi:

May The Gods and The Sun (The King) ask after your well being, the well being of your house, your sons (and) your land.

You have written to me through the agency of Yarima: "Send the women of the young men, and their (the young men's) wherewithal."

However, I said: "I am sending (them)."

Now, here is Yarima – ask him, and here they are.

They moved away (or, went away from work). The gods have decided between me and them (or, judged me)

Small Towns and Nodes of Ritual Power

If Hazor stood on a plane of its own, and palatial centers like Kumidi and Megiddo on a second level, then a third tier of south Levantine LBA polities would have been composed of minor palazzi and ritual centers that served as nodes of regional power (such as it was). Batash and Bet Shemesh, in the central plains, exemplify the first category, while Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley and Shiloh (and probably Jerusalem) in the central hills represent the second, to which Lachish may be added as well. The enigmatic Amman Airport structure, which seems to have become all things to all people (shrine? tower? trading post?), is an outlier that illustrates some of the issues peculiar to the Transjordanian plateau.

Tel Batash and Tel Bet Shemesh, in the central plains and foothills, east of the coastal plain, are straightforward examples of middle-sized settlements marked by the presence of patrician houses, rich material culture assemblages and frequent, violent destructions. While the Tel Bet Shemesh structure revealed some of the paraphernalia of power, staple accumulation and

externally sanctioned prestige, the Tel Batash building appears to have accented staple accumulation alone.

At Tel Batash, three principal strata, VIII–VI, each terminated by destruction, are attributed to the late fifteenth to early twelfth centuries.¹²⁴ Only a single structure was excavated in each layer, near the northeast corner of the town defined by the MBA ramparts, but excavations in other parts of the mound suggested that houses formed a continuous belt around the perimeter of the site, while at least part of the interior was devoted to agricultural industries.

Building 475 of Stratum VIII (LB IB–LB IIA) was a sturdy square structure (13.1 × 13.7 meters). Its ground floor contained an entrance hall; a main, pillared living space; two small rooms; three small spaces, apparently for storage; and a stairwell leading to the roof (there does not appear to have been a second story). Hundreds of ceramic vessels were found in the destruction debris, virtually all of them described as utilitarian in nature – primarily bowls, storage jars, cooking vessels and jugs. The density of finds seems excessive for a household of this size, and various explanations have been offered by the excavators, with the most likely being that both the storage and the food preparation conducted in and around the building served more than just its residents. Despite the large quantity of storage vessels, calculated as having a total capacity of 964 liters, their economic significance does not exceed that of household use, since all were of portable size.¹²⁵ Fifty-one imported sherds, virtually all Cypriot, were recorded, representing both closed (Base-Ring and White-Shaved jugs and juglets) and open (White Slip II) vessels.

Building 315 represents the Stratum VII rebuild of the house, on a somewhat more modest scale (11.1 × 13.5 meters). It was now designed as a large hall on the ground floor, its roof supported by two rows of five pillars and a second story that was at least partly used as a living space. Also, the remains of several installations were discovered in the open area abutting the building, suggesting the presence of agricultural industries. The destruction of this building was more violent and rapid, as attested by two skeletons found on its floor and by the relatively large quantity of portable finds and personal items in the destruction debris. The latter included several cylinder and scarab seals, jewelry, a pair of bronze cymbals and two sheet figurines, and a collection of arrow- and spear-heads. The pottery assemblage generally resembled that of the previous stage in character, although with a relatively reduced storage capacity and with the addition of Aegean wares to the imported assemblage.

Strata VIB and VIA are separated by a brief period of abandonment from Stratum VII, and represent construction that is unrelated to the former structures, dated to the late thirteenth to early twelfth centuries. Notably, the ceramic tradition is contiguous with the previous phases, although somewhat impoverished, while imports decline markedly.

At Tel Bet Shemesh, early excavations revealed the general contours of an extensive, densely built-up settlement within the confines of an earlier fortified MBA city (Stratum IV of the Grant–Wright excavations).¹²⁶ Renewed excavations uncovered strata of the fourteenth and thirteenth century, and it is to the earlier stratum (Level 9) that a large courtyard building, only partly excavated, is assigned.¹²⁷ About 250 square meters of the building have been exposed in eight to ten rooms built against the earlier fortifications on the north slope of the city. These rooms contained evidence for storage in portable jars, for food preparation and, in one room, for ceremonial food consumption. The latter context consisted of a ceramic bin-like installation containing an assemblage of 27 ceramic vessels that included 14 carinated and open bowls, four chalices, a large jug, a krater, juglets (including two Cypriot Base-Ring I juglets), a single oil lamp and two rare Late Minoan IIIA1 cups; a strainer tip of a bronze drinking straw for alcoholic beverages was found nearby. Also found in a nearby context were a rare commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III and a plaque figurine, interpreted as that of a female ruler presented as male (Figure 6.14).¹²⁸ The excavators interpret the structure as the possible palace of a female ruler of Bet Shemesh, perhaps the “lady of the lionesses” mentioned in the El-Amarna correspondence, and the Minoan vessels as gifts made to this ruler, perhaps by Egyptians. These unusual vessels were subsequently incorporated in ceremonial feasts held in the palace as part of the social and political articulation of its residents.¹²⁹ The Level 9 palace was burnt to the



Figure 6.14 Bet Shemesh: finds from the fourteenth-century palace: a Cypriot juglet, bronze arrowheads and straw-tip, a commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III, a plaque figurine and two Minoan cups. Photos by P. Shrago. Courtesy of the Tel Bet Shemesh Excavation Project.

ground, to be replaced by two thirteenth-century BCE structures about which little has been reported.

Lachish occupies a curious position in relation to other mounds of the southern plains. At the start of the LBA, as noted earlier, an active cult site sprang up at the base of the large mound, but the town proper was left virtually unoccupied. Even during the following phase, in LB IIA, the town expanded quite slowly, with remains recognized only on the slope above the fosse (Ussishkin's Area S),¹³⁰ while the Fosse Temple itself continued to flourish, doubling in size, and several tombs, with a wealth of imported pottery, were in use. This phase should represent the fourteenth century BCE, when the town figures prominently in the Amarna correspondence. However, it is only in the following stratum, Level VII (equated with Fosse Temple III), ascribed to the thirteenth century, that the town experiences a building boom, which reaches its peak in Stratum VI, of the twelfth century. At that time, the Fosse Temple was burnt with all its contents and promptly covered, perhaps intentionally, to be replaced with the Acropolis Temple.¹³¹ Phases II and III of the Fosse Temple, during which the central hall was enlarged to a size of 10 × 10 meters and furnished with several rows of offering benches and four central pillars, provided an assemblage of prestige artifacts reminiscent of that seen in palatial contexts in the northern sites (Kumidi, Hazor and Megiddo) – ivory cosmetic accessories of the best Levantine style, decorated faience bowls and faience and glass containers, jewelry, and stone vessels – accompanied by an enormous quantity of ceramics (mainly bowls) that included many imported vessels, Cypriot, Aegean and Egyptian.¹³² The assemblage of imported ceramics contrasts with the relative dearth of such objects in the sites previously described and resonates with rich assemblages of imported Cypriot and Aegean wares, as well as local imitations of these wares, found in several tombs excavated along the flanks of the mound. The local-tradition vessels in the Fosse temple included cooking pots and finely decorated drinking and mixing vessels, evidence of communal feasting and drinking in and around the shrine.¹³³ One of these is the so-called Lachish Ewer – a jug decorated with the ibex and palm tree motif, to which a Canaanite alphabetic dedication to the goddess Elat was added.¹³⁴ This is one of several early alphabetic inscriptions found at or near Lachish,¹³⁵ which, inscribed on pots before or after firing, continue the non-scribal genealogy of early alphabetic writing, in contrast to the hieratic or cuneiform inscribed objects that served administrative or diplomatic functions.

Stratum VI shows evidence for the intensification of contact with the Egyptian administration, although it is not reckoned among the places inhabited by Egyptian officials or troops.¹³⁶ On the acropolis, the new temple bears a general similarity to the Bet Shean temples of Strata VII–VI, with a large, pillared central hall and a staircase leading to the inner sanctuary (Figure 6.15). To the left of the staircase, three octagonal pillars framed what was probably a double niche for the cult figures.¹³⁷ A gold plaque found

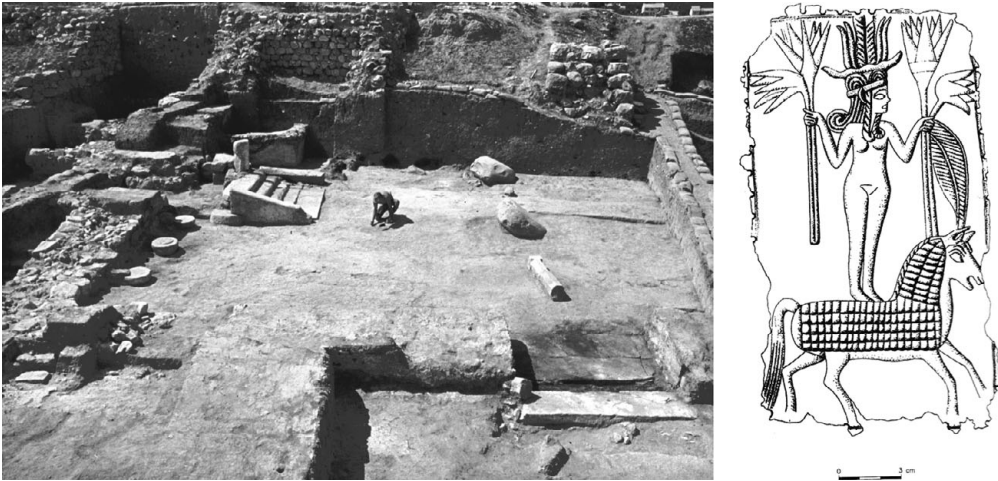


Figure 6.15 The Lachish Stratum VI acropolis temple and a drawing of a gold plaque found in the temple, showing a nude goddess astride a war-horse. Courtesy of D. Ussishkin.

nearby depicts a nude goddess with a feathered headdress, astride a war-horse and grasping a lotus in each hand.¹³⁸ The combination of Egyptian and Levantine elements on this plaque, and in the building as an ensemble, suggests that the changes effected in Stratum VI at Lachish were related to the increased presence of Egyptian officials and military personnel in the southern part of Canaan in the twelfth century BCE. Other elements that can be related to this presence include a group of inscribed offering bowls that record tax payments in hieratic script, similar to those at Tell el-Far‘ah (South) and Tell esh-Sharia‘, fragments of a bronze plaque inscribed with the cartouche of Ramesses III, and parts of anthropoid coffins found in a late LBA tomb.¹³⁹ The mid-section of what appears to be a coffin of this type bears a poorly executed hieroglyphic inscription (holes drilled into this object after firing indicate that it was not used as a coffin, but had some other purpose in the mortuary ritual). Despite these elements of official Egyptian presence, the quantities of Egyptian pottery at Lachish were small, and do not appear to represent permanent residence at the site. The Stratum VI changes might therefore be interpreted as a shift in the internal balance of power in Lachish, effected in the crucible of the heavy late thirteenth- and early twelfth-century Egyptian involvement in the southern plains, in which a sedentary or urbanizing “tell faction” established a power base on the summit of the mound, at the expense of the “Fosse Temple faction” (associated with Fosse Temple III and the Stratum VII buildings). The latter had, in the thirteenth century, promoted cooperation with non-urban elements outside the mound, while serving as an important player in the lively retail trade in Mediterranean imports and preciosities, both of which are notably absent in the Stratum VI acropolis temple.

Batash, Bet Shemesh and Lachish represent a pattern of oscillation in the extent and prosperity of individual settlements in the southern plains that is typical of the region: Batash and Bet Shemesh are more substantial in the fourteenth century BCE, fading somewhat in the thirteenth century and certainly in the twelfth, while a modest fourteenth-century settlement at Lachish is succeeded by more substantial thirteenth- to twelfth-century settlement. Similarly, the village sites of Tel Harasim and Tell Beit Mirsim are more substantial in the earlier part of the LB II,¹⁴⁰ while recent and ongoing excavations at Tel Burna, Tel Azekah and Tell es-Safi all point to a more substantial occupation at the end of the period (all three sites) and into the TBI (Azekah alone).¹⁴¹ These late LBA sites are characterized by substantial houses or public buildings (Safi, Azekah) and possible cult structures (Burna).

Continuing a pattern that began in LB I, the crystallization of power around cult centers should be seen as a viable political alternative to urban domination. We have seen the Egyptian cooptation of such a center at Bet Shean, while Lachish (and possibly Burna) represent a southern plains version of this strategy. Another site that conforms to this pattern is Deir 'Alla, at the interface between the southern Jordan Valley and the Transjordanian plateau, and I would suggest that it can be extended to the Transjordanian highlands (Amman Airport) and the central highlands (Jerusalem and Shiloh). In each of these locations, described below, temples served as regional seasonal meeting grounds for dispersed groups who lay outside the control of the urban centers, setting the scene for communal commemoration, competitive feasting, socializing and marriage arrangements and eventually enabling the emergence of new coalitions of clans and leaders. The same dynamic appears to animate the unique late LBA stela from Balua', in the south Transjordanian plateau: a locally carved stela shows an Egyptian investiture scene, at the center of which is a local ruler wearing a nomadic *shasu*-style headdress, associated with sun-disk and crescent symbols, the like of which we have already witnessed in other ritual settings.¹⁴²

Tell Deir 'Alla lies in the central eastern Jordan Valley, on the route leading from Pella and Tell es-Sa'idiya toward the plateau, by way of Wadi az-Zarqa. Ceramic evidence for a shrine at Tell Deir 'Alla begins in LB I, but the main excavated remains date to the thirteenth to twelfth centuries BCE.¹⁴³ As is often the case, the structure was built on an artificial platform. It appears to have consisted of a central cult structure – a sturdily built pillared hall, reconstructed as a long-room of about 10 × 12 meters, entered from the north – adjoined by auxiliary rooms to its east, packed with cult paraphernalia (Figure 6.16). Several small structures lying west of the structure might have been used by the temple staff. Finds in the cella included the cup-and-saucer combination that often appears in cultic contexts, a model shrine and many faience objects of Egyptian origin or inspiration, including a large vase bearing a cartouche of Queen Tawosret, the last ruler of the Nineteenth Dynasty

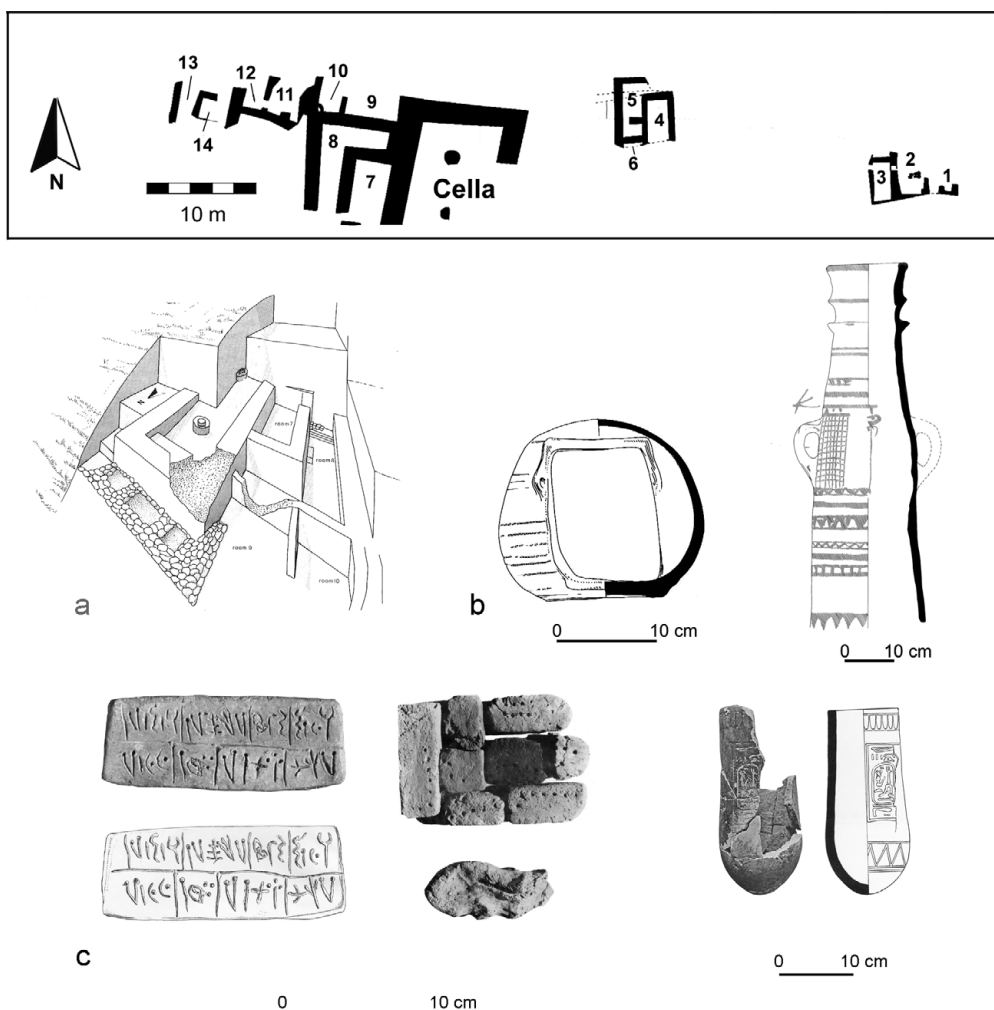


Figure 6.16 (a) Plan and isometric view of the shrine at Deir 'Alla cella, (b) ceramic cult vessels and (c) inscribed and dotted clay plaques and a faience vessel bearing the name of Tawosret. Reconstruction and cult vessels redrawn after Franken 1992: figs. 3.2, 4.3 and 4.16. Plan and photos courtesy of M.L. Steiner and B. Wagemakers.

(c. 1190 BCE). The auxiliary rooms to the east contained numerous ceramic pouring and drinking vessels (goblets, chalices, bowls, jugs, juglets, flasks, a kernos, a bird-shaped vessel, Mycenaean stirrup jars), model shrines, cylinder seals and clay plaques inscribed in an undeciphered script, which seem to point to some sort of record-keeping. The latter objects recall the concentration of inscribed objects from Lachish, which also included a stone bowl inscribed in an undeciphered linear script. Van der Steen, noting an uptick in the number of settled sites in the east Jordan Valley in the later LBA, proposes that the Deir 'Alla region was the domain of one tribal group that maintained the religious

center at Deir ‘Alla and a burial ground at Katarat as-Samra, but the archaeological details remain rather sketchy.¹⁴⁴

The Amman Airport structure has been a favorite archaeological conversation-piece since its accidental discovery in 1955.¹⁴⁵ On the one hand, its symmetrical square plan seems to place it in the category of solitary elite structures like those identified as “residences,” when connected to Egypt, or as “patrician houses,” when not. On the other hand, its unusual contents point in other directions, such as cult and interregional trade. Its long history could also suggest that its function changed over time; it is particularly disturbing that all the local pottery from the original excavation has gone missing, and that no finds can be attributed with certainty to the floors of the building itself, while many of the exotic small finds – for example, ivories, gold diadems and stone beads – originate in the methodically excavated fill *beneath* the stone pavement. It thus cannot be ruled out that the stone structure was superimposed on a pre-existing open-air site. The presence of fragmented human bones, quantities of imported vessels (mainly LH IIIA–B and some Late Minoan III and Cypriot), jewelry and cosmetic items, many stone vessels (but no faience!) and bronze weapons all points strongly to a mortuary origin for the fill of the structure. The possible mortuary connection brings to mind a badly preserved LB I structure in Area F at Hazor, for which Yadin offered a reconstruction based on the Amman airport structure¹⁴⁶: in the subsequent phase, the area served as an open cult space, possibly to be associated with the nearby tomb complex 8144–8145, where large numbers of Aegean pots were deposited over a long period of use.¹⁴⁷

Moving to the highlands west of the Jordan River, Shiloh and possibly Jerusalem mark additional ritual centers that might have been nodes of local political power. The excavations at Shiloh – a regional center in the early Iron Age – uncovered the dispersed remains of an LB I–IIA cultic midden, containing a large amount of bones (mainly sheep and goat) and hundreds of fragmentary ceramic vessels.¹⁴⁸ Bowls and goblets constituted more than 80 percent of the vessels, and the rest were kraters, cooking pots and juglets, with only a few fragments of storage jars. The Jerusalem evidence is almost entirely circumstantial. Urban and village settlement in and around the fortified center had disappeared before 1600 BCE, and the only stratified LBA remains in the core of the ancient city appear to date to the thirteenth century. As for the fourteenth century, the only archaeological evidence comes from tomb deposits on the Mount of Olives and at Nahalat Ahim, both at some distance from the town, and from a stray find of a cuneiform tablet in later fills deposited near the Temple Mount. Village settlement in the region of Jerusalem is also virtually unknown, with the earliest rural sites being those at Malha and Giloh, from the mid- to late thirteenth century BCE.¹⁴⁹ The thirteenth- to eleventh-century finds from the acropolis area of ancient Jerusalem, above the Gihon Spring, come from fragmentary floors and

constructional fills associated with construction on top of the hill, variously attributed to the twelfth, eleventh or tenth centuries.¹⁵⁰ Notably, they include a cast-bronze fist of a Ba'al statue and part of a decorated cult-stand that appear to show a nude captive,¹⁵¹ which hint at the continued importance of the sacred spring/hill axis posited as one of the mainstays of the MBA polity (see Chapter 5). Assuming the heads of the fourteenth-century polity represented in the Amarna correspondence resided on or near the acropolis, a very small settlement must be assumed to have existed, functioning – at best – as a periodic center for groups represented in the tomb and sparse village finds in the nearby hills.

Coastal Sites and the Mediterranean Trade

Cyprian Broodbank's lively portrait of the booming Eastern Mediterranean trade of the fourteenth century BCE exploits four broad windows opened by archaeology on to the nature of interregional commerce across the basin: the merchant's archives of the city of Ugarit, on the north Levantine coast; the famed Uluburun wreck of a heavily laden merchant ship off the southern coast of Anatolia; the portrait of international relations provided by the archives of King Akhenaten at el-Amarna in Egypt; and the discoveries in an island stopover for Egypt-bound traders just off the northeast African coast.¹⁵² What stands out in the first three examples is the strong flavor of elite involvement and the politics of prestige that accompanied the transshipment of goods around the Mediterranean basin. The fourth, however, illustrates a much more modest aspect of the trading enterprise. In the theater of "international trade," the principal actors are involved in a complex etiquette that defines exchange as diplomacy; objects as both gifts and commodities, alienable and inalienable; and where the gains to be made are both social and commercial. Even the merchants of Ugarit are, simultaneously, private entrepreneurs and agents of the king.¹⁵³ At the margins of these official, reciprocal exchanges, however, a space of purely commercial transactions, terminal rather than open-ended, does exist. Thus, in a list of transactions recorded in Ugarit that involve people from the coastal sites of the southern Levant, Vidal notes several instances of private, small-scale commodity trade.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, in the Uluburun shipwreck, among the masses of bulk products that must have been enabled, if not initiated, by royal protagonists,¹⁵⁵ there are clear instances of a sideline in small-scale barter that could have been the initiative of the ship's owner or even of its crew. Of these, the one that should interest us most – because of its repercussions for the southern Levant – comprises pithoi that were found laden with small quantities of Cypriot ceramics. Nicolle Hirschfeld describes three shipments – about 140 vessels in all – of diverse types of quotidian ceramics, each packed – but not completely filling – a Cypriot pithos. She plausibly interprets them as consignments – perhaps belonging to different crew

members, or aimed at different customers – collected at various ports of trade (since Cypriot pottery traveled widely, it need not have been picked up solely in Cyprus), and probably complemented with some unpreserved commodity (textiles?) that filled the bulk of each pithos.¹⁵⁶

Regarding the southern Levant, where no textual evidence exists for the kind of bulk exchange of raw materials and staple products that characterized sea trade between Egypt, Ugarit or Hatti and overland trade with Babylon, it seems pertinent to examine whether sea-based commerce was part of the local prestige economy, described in the previous section, or if it might have been entirely limited to the kind of retail commerce recorded at the margins. Looking at the excavated ports of the south Levantine coast, we may ask if they were integrated in the web of Egyptian interests in the Levant during any part of the LBA, if their primary trading contacts were with each other, or if they served as gateways to inland sites. Does the distribution of imported objects show an informative pattern? Can markets or commodity flows be sustained by the evidence?

Our knowledge of the central Levantine seaports south of Byblos is frustratingly thin. About Byblos itself, virtually no information is forthcoming (despite its prominence in the Amarna correspondence). Three sites mentioned in the Nineteenth Dynasty Anastasi Papyrus I – Sidon, Sarepta and Tyre – have seen very limited LBA exposures. At Sidon, the only stratified evidence comes from the College Site ritual complex, where extensive deposits of bowls and lamps accompany sacrifices of whole sheep or choice cuts in what has been identified as a funerary feasting context.¹⁵⁷ At Tyre, a sounding excavated many years ago establishes only an LB IIA–B presence at the site.¹⁵⁸ At Sarepta there is a full LBA sequence, showing evidence of metalworking in the LB IIA and the proliferation of potter's workshops in the LB IIB–TBI phases.¹⁵⁹ These latter discoveries could have a bearing on coastal trade, as they might have produced some of the Levantine jars found in various Mediterranean destinations.

Farther south, Michal Artzy links together three LBA harbors that frame the Carmel ridge, allowing access to the inland valleys from either the north, along the Qishon River system, or the south, through the Wadi al-Mughara pass: Tel Akko, on the northern side of the Bay of Akko; Tell Abu Hawam, in the Qishon estuary on its south side; and Tel Nami, on a small inlet south of the bay.¹⁶⁰ She sees Tell Abu Hawam as the chief anchorage of the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries, giving way – perhaps due to the silting-up of its harbor – to Akko and Nami in the thirteenth to twelfth centuries. The site of Dor, where the relevant strata have been excavated in only a limited way, can be paired with Nami as well.¹⁶¹ All these sites produced large amounts of imported pottery, from Cyprus, the Aegean, Egypt and Anatolia, as well as other objects of the type exchanged across the Mediterranean. The same sites are also identified as a probable source for some of the pistacia resin-carrying (or coated) “Canaanite” jars discovered in Eighteenth Dynasty contexts in Egypt.¹⁶²

Tel Akko is the longest-lived site of the group, having been settled since the MB I period (see Chapter 5), and mentioned often in contemporary LBA texts (especially at Ugarit), but provides the fewest archaeological details relevant to the issues in question. We may supplement it, however, with the rich haul of finds provided by the “Persian Garden” tombs discovered about 1,500 meters north of the mound.¹⁶³ Only five undisturbed graves were excavated in the cemetery, but surface finds suggest that as many more were destroyed prior to the excavation. Three of the graves, one containing three adults (two men and a woman) and the others one each, are of similar quality: they are plain pit burials, marked by four local storage jars, and they contain a wealth of burial gifts with a strong international flavor (Figure 6.17). These include imported Cypriot LC IIA–B and Aegean LH IIIA2 types (two fragments of Late Minoan IIIA1–2 cups were found on the surface), found in numbers equal or exceeding those of the local Levantine wares, two Egyptian ceramic imports, gold-capped cylinder seals of ambiguous north Levantine or Cypriot origin, a bronze plaque of a nude goddess and additional bronze ceremonial objects (a mirror, a trident, halberds, cymbals), gold and silver jewelry (including Egyptian finger-rings), and more than fifty stone and bronze weights, which were found to conform to Egyptian, Babylonian and Levantine standards. A fourth grave, which may have been disturbed in antiquity, was partly rock-cut; just outside the partly cut cist lay skeletal remains of two individuals next to an overturned bathtub-shaped larnax (clay coffin) of a type usually associated with the Minoan culture. This grave had few grave-goods, compared with the others, as did the fifth grave, that of an infant. The weights interred in the adult graves near Akko suggest that these are the tombs of merchants, buried according to a custom that developed locally, along the coast, during the LBA. The juxtaposition of ceremonial, personal and professional items in the graves tracks closely with the expressions of religious piety visible at many coastal sites (see below). The sacrifice of valuables with these merchants would have been perceived, in the context of the moral economy of the LBA, as a gift both to the spirits of the dead and to the gods, who – it would be hoped – would reciprocate by assuring the success of the risk-laden maritime ventures on which the coast-dwellers were dependent.

Tell Abu Hawam might be the most informative site of the three reviewed by Artzy. The site, which has virtually succumbed to industrial development and pollution along the bay, north of Haifa, was excavated *in extenso* by R.W. Hamilton and Na'im Makhoul in 1932–1933, and later studied by Balensi and Artzy.¹⁶⁴ The relevant stratum, Hamilton's Stratum V, revealed a sea-wall on the north, protecting a settlement with a prominent, perhaps official building on the west end, a shrine on the east end and several houses in between, presumed to have been built in a second phase. Several stone anchors were incorporated in later buildings at the site, and could have originated in the LBA. The publications on Abu Hawam do not provide a clear picture of the

typical assemblage of the various units, but it seems reasonably clear that the bulk of the material belonged to the local Levantine tradition, while imported pottery – Cypriot, Aegean, Minoan, Anatolian and Egyptian – formed a very significant portion of the household assemblages. Notably, the Aegean assemblage included large stirrup jars, very rare in Levantine contexts, that were used to carry valued oils and perfumes in bulk,¹⁶⁵ alongside great quantities of small stirrup jars into which the contents of the large jars were presumably decanted before being sent on to their next destination. Another unusual feature of the Tell Abu Hawam assemblage is the great quantity of LH IIIB cups and chalices, accompanied by large mixing kraters, that testify – rather unsurprisingly for a port – to Aegean-style social drinking at this harbor site. In addition, the presumed shrine included several gilt-bronze figurines of north Levantine type and several extraordinary anthropomorphic faience cups, with parallels in Ugarit and Cyprus. Surprisingly, there is no mention of any special storage areas or concentrations of storage jars that one would expect in a major port and little evidence of incoming commerce from the interior.

Tel Nami was a long-abandoned early MBA port when it was resettled in the LB II. On a small promontory overlooking a lagoon, a platform formed by a large retaining wall has been identified as the site of an open sanctuary, composed of a walled 6.5×10 meter court strewn with cult objects and evidence of metalworking activities. The nearby necropolis contained forty-one graves; most of them were simple or stone-lined cists, but a few were adult interments in collared-rim pithoi – an unusual use for an unusual vessel type in the LB II (the type was also encountered in the Nami settlement). The Nami tombs were richly furnished with imported ceramics, bronze lamps, bowls, wine-sets and even a Syro-Hittite signet ring. One, dubbed “the priest’s tomb,” contained two adults and a child accompanied by two bronze tripod incense burners (one with pomegranate – or poppy capsule – bells and one with a central shaft in the form of a nude woman), bronze scepters with pomegranate heads and other valuables. Rather than a trading entrepot, as presented by Artzy, Nami appears to be a coastal shrine for seafarers, visible to all those who plied the coastal route.¹⁶⁶

There are few candidates for more southerly ports in Canaan. Jaffa, the site of the Ramesside fortress described earlier in this chapter, probably served as a harbor, but no archaeological evidence is forthcoming. Farther south, anchorages are assumed to have existed near Tel Mor, serving Ashdod, and at Ashqelon. Both sites – like the harbor sites of the north, Dor, Nami, Abu Hawam and Akko – produced imported Egyptian jars and imported Mediterranean pottery, but little more can be said.

The evidence of the south Levantine ports seems consistent with our expectations from the nature of south Levantine polities: potential harbors seem to have been in contact with one another, and could have served as ports of entry for seafarers and for relatively low-value commodities from

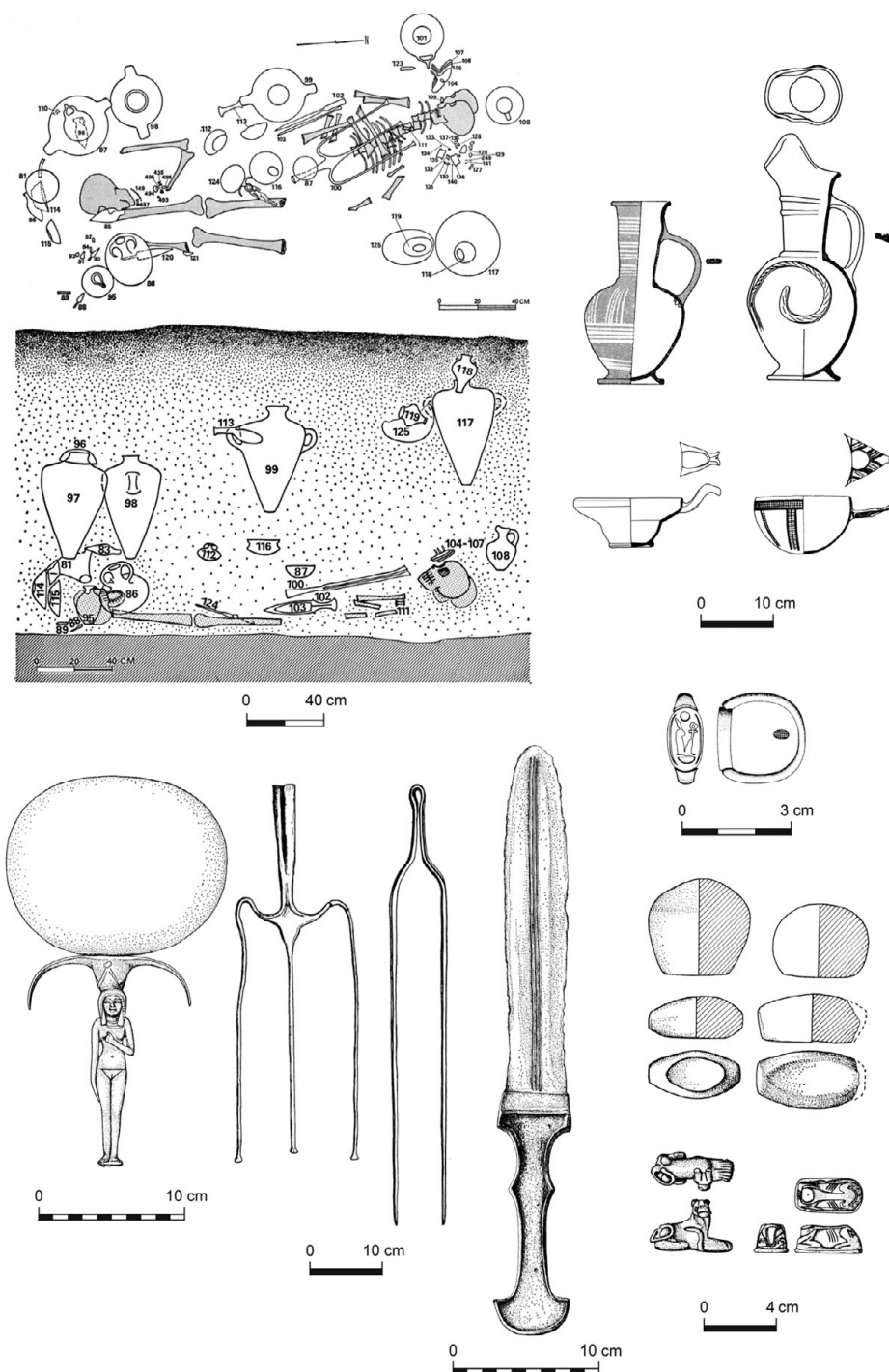


Figure 6.17 Akko, Persian Garden: Tomb No. 3 and selected finds from the cemetery, including a bronze mirror, a trident, tongs and a sword, Cypriot Base-Ring I-II jugs and White Slip II bowls, an Egyptian ring and merchants' weights. After Ben-Arieh and Edelstein 1977: figs. 3, 12–14, 15, 18, 25. Reproduced by permission of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

the west – the kinds of commodities that rarely merit any textual mention, particularly ceramic vessels and their occasional liquid contents (perfumes, condiments and the like). As low-level economic players, the south Levantine harbors do not show any sign of centralized administration (Egyptian or otherwise), nor do they appear to have served as entrepôts for bulk products shipped westward, from the inland plains or valleys. What is supported by the evidence currently in hand is the existence of a lively retail trade in ceramic commodities and their contents, of the kind practiced by sailors on the Uluburun ship selling pottery by consignment or by the traders at Abu Hawam decanting the contents of large stirrup jars into scores of smaller ones. Each such batch could have been acquired by local traders for services rendered at the port or in exchange for similar small batches of products from the interior. There is no need – or any evidence – for the activity of palace-sponsored merchants, in the mold of the great houses of Ugarit.¹⁶⁷ The quantities of imported Cypriot and Aegean pottery could have been distributed on an ad hoc basis, by itinerant peddlers traveling alone or on the coattails of the occasional official or military caravan.

This hypothetical model of trade in Mediterranean imports is borne out by the patterns of consumption of such products at inland sites. In LB IA, we saw a strict longitudinal division of the southern Levant into a coastal strip that imported Cypriot Wheelmade Bichrome, Monochrome and other wares, perhaps to compensate for the loss of local ceramic expertise following the MBA collapse, and interior valleys that produced or imported Chocolate-on-White vessels from a northern Jordan Valley source, for similar reasons. Few vessels escaped the main areas of distribution, except for those found in the Jezreel Valley, the historic mediator between the interior and the coast. In the absence of LB IA palaces it is difficult to gauge whether these wares had prestige value, but their distribution in tombs and in cult settings was not very wide. From the late fifteenth century onward, the palatial prestige economies of Hazor, Megiddo and Kumidi prioritized specialized craft production (probably on-site at Hazor) and the acquisition of precious objects and materials (especially cedar wood) from the central and northern Levant, that is, overland. Imported Mediterranean pottery began to arrive in increasing amounts, but seems to have lost its elite luster: it was not very common in palatial contexts (the Minoan cups at Bet Shemesh were quite old at the time of their use, and certainly carried the value of an unusual biography), but had a broad distribution in tombs and popular cult sites. The most widely circulated imported products in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries were Cypriot Base-Ring and White-Slip bowls and Mycenaean cups and chalices, common in settlement contexts, which continued to serve as fine presentation ware in lieu of local fine-ware production, and Cypriot Base-Ring jugs/juglets, White Shaved juglets and Mycenaean stirrup-jars, which practically cornered the narrow-necked vessel market, crucial for traditional Levantine burial rites.

The imported wares of the southern Levant have a long history of specialized study and meticulous quantification, often based on individual sherd counts.¹⁶⁸ This approach breeds serious distortions, as, in the first instance, the highly visible Cypriot and Aegean imports are collected at a much higher rate than the local wares: we have already seen that the entire volume of local pottery was discarded or otherwise lost in the first Amman Airport excavations, while a recent, limited excavation at import-rich Tell el-‘Ajjul, which counted all sherds, recorded less than 2 percent imported pottery – 945 pieces out of a total of 65,000,¹⁶⁹ contrasting with the old excavation report, where imports and local types appear in approximately equal numbers! Second, it is virtually impossible to normalize sherd counts in relation to the extent of the excavations at settlements, or the time range of tombs used for multiple interments, which have typically provided the largest quantities of whole vessels. Despite these caveats, quantifications can give a notion of the numbers of vessels involved and the possibility of identifying trade routes.

In broad terms, the distribution of imported ceramics across the southern Levant is congruent with the sites excavated. That is, there are virtually no settlements or cemeteries devoid of imported ceramics. Moreover, there is no clear association of imports with specific routes or political territories: they are frequent in regions of diffuse Egyptian intervention and interaction in the south, as well as in the coastal and valley regions of the north, where the Egyptian impact was confined to specific centers. They can be found in tombs in Hazor in the Jordan Valley, as well as near Shechem in the central hills. The quantities involved are large, but not industrial in scale. In the “Mycenean Tomb” at Tel Dan, 31 imported vessels (out of a total of 108), of which 28 were identified as Mycenean (including a magnificent charioteer krater), accompany the burial of about 30 individuals over a time span estimated at 60 years (Figure 6.18). This implies, on the average, the import of one vessel for each of the interred, or five vessels per decade. Judging by the other contents of the tomb – ivory cosmetic containers, bronze bowls, lamps and a wine-set, numerous weapons, stone vases in the same craft tradition as those found at Kamid el-Loz, silver and gold jewelry and glass vessels – its occupants belonged to the wealthy elite. It seems, therefore, that one or two lots of imported vessels per decade – perhaps custom-ordered, in this unusual case – could suffice for a site like Tel Dan. The numbers at Tel Hazor are similar,¹⁷⁰ and the rarity of imported vessels in the royal complex there suggests that there was no formal administration of sea-based trade. At Lachish, which we have already identified as a regional ceremonial center, there is evidence for many hundreds of imported vessels – especially Cypriot wares – over the fifteenth to thirteenth centuries. Even so, these numbers do not amount to more than a few dozen vessels per year – equivalent to one ceramic consignment in the “unofficial” cargo of the Uluburun ship.

In answer to the questions raised at the start of this section, interregional mercantile trade does not appear to have been a major factor in the south Levantine economy. Egypt seems to have been content with the staple tribute/taxes imposed on local towns to answer the needs of military units and garrisons; its presence is not felt at the main coastal trade centers. This is particularly noticeable in the thirteenth century, when the Egyptian presence intensified, but did not translate into greater involvement in coastal trade. As for local elites, they were engaged, for the most part, in formalized diplomatic exchanges of high-value, low-bulk craft objects, presumably with their peers in other parts of the Egyptian Levant. At Hazor – the only economy of any scale in the south Levant – there is evidence for bulk imports on overland routes, particularly of cedar wood from the north. On the strength of later models (I Kings 9:10–14), commerce of this type would also have been cast in terms of reciprocal gift-giving among peers. Trade in imported goods was, however, important for all sectors of society, insofar as these goods were desired for use in ritual or ceremonial contexts, in temples, shrines and tombs. Since both Egyptians and local elites patronized local cult centers as a way of monitoring and perhaps mollifying sedentary and non-sedentary groups who coalesced around them, a thriving, small-scale retail trade was allowed to flourish along the coast, pulling in batches of local products – textiles, oils or resins – and distributing its products in the interior, without any sign of “government” interference, or even of particular interest.

MORTUARY PRACTICES AND FLUID IDENTITIES

Tombs and tomb furnishings have put in a prominent appearance in previous sections, insofar as they contribute to our understanding of the MB–LB transition, the nature of political and cultural interactions with Egypt and the values informing the prestige economy and the conduct of trade. Here I would like to bring these instances of mortuary behavior into relationship with each other, and with the trajectory of LBA society. The treatment of the dead, the symbolic and sensory nature of commemorative practices, the advertisement of status and the cultural affinities exhibited in LBA tombs may be interpreted as scripted performances of disparate identities within a south Levantine society characterized – more than at any other time in the Bronze Age – by deep divisions and weak collective institutions.

In Chapter 5, three kinds of cemeteries were shown to typify MB II: traditional cave-cemeteries situated next to settlements, often originating in the third millennium; off-site cemeteries, linked to village and pastoral settlement; and intramural burials, in pits and in built mausolea, characterizing established urban households. The disintegration of MBA society is reflected in profound changes to burial arrangements. At the beginning of the LBA, most of the traditional cave cemeteries fell – temporarily or permanently – out



Figure 6.18 Mycenaean pottery from a built tomb at Tel Dan. Courtesy of the Tel Dan Excavations, Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology.

of use. There are a few recorded cases of continuous cave burial spanning the transition, while at Megiddo and at 'Ajjul, intramural burial, in pits and in structural tombs, continued for a while. By the end of the fifteenth century, however, the practice of burial within settlements ceased (apart from a few cases in northern Canaan – at Hazor, Laish/Dan and Kumidi). The use of traditional cemeteries at large sites was renewed, to an extent, in LB IIA, but most burials occurred in extensive pit- or cist-grave cemeteries found along the coast and in the southern plains, or in caves, more typical of the hilly zone, often found at a distance from the nearest known settlement sites. Combinations of pit and cave interments are not uncommon in transitional areas. Rivka Gonen, in her extensive review of LBA burial patterns, elaborates on a variety of practices that she has attached, with various degrees of certainty, to specific cultural traditions.¹⁷¹ Multiple burials in caves, often cut in earlier periods and reused – after a time – in the LB I or LB II, are considered traditional Canaanite (or “Amorite”) practices, employed by sedentary and non-sedentary people; anthropoid coffin burials are viewed by Gonen as Egyptian; larnax interments are of Aegean origin; and adult jar-burials are attributed to Anatolian influence. In addition, Gonen suggests that the ubiquitous pit burials of the coastal regions are evidence of the deep-seated influence of Egyptian concepts regarding the preservation of the individual body. While these different approaches to the treatment and final disposition of the dead certainly indicate a diversity of cultural approaches, they are less likely to point to bounded identities than Gonen would have us believe. We have already seen that the “Egyptian” coffin burials of Deir el-Balah, Far'ah and Bet Shean are culturally ambivalent, fusing traditional Levantine practices with Egyptian symbolic representations. Moreover, we have seen a strong connection between these burials and the pit/pithos burials of Tell es-Sa'idiya, where there are no anthropoid coffins. Moreover, the pit burials of the northern coast have no direct Egyptian affinities; if anything, they seem to point toward a multicultural Mediterranean *koiné* that cannot be pinned to a specific place of origin. Likewise, the use of old IBA or MBA caves cannot be taken as an indicator of indigenous continuity, since such caves could be furnished with “Egyptian” anthropoid coffins (at Bet Shean and Far'ah) or with a “Minoan” larnax (at Gezer).¹⁷²

It may therefore be more informative to classify tombs in relation to the types of social personae that appear to be represented by their organization and by their furnishings, noting the strategic deployment of cultural representations. At the top of the ladder we may place tombs that exhibit an unusual investment of labor or skill in their construction, and whose contents advertise affiliation with the pan-Levantine network of local elites. These would include the “Treasury” at Kamid el-Loz and the stone corbelled chamber tomb at Dan (the “Mycenean” tomb), both of which have been described above, as well as a recently excavated tomb near Tell Irbid, a regional center in northern

Transjordan.¹⁷³ The Irbid tomb is a small rock-cut shaft-tomb designed to accommodate a single interment, identified as a woman of thirty-plus years. She was provided with a small collection of extraordinary objects: two ivory cosmetic boxes and an elephant-ivory palette adorned with exquisitely carved lions; a tusk-shaped ivory container with several detachable parts, carved in the form of an ungulate; a bronze bowl; and some simple jewelry and local pottery. Also in this elite category – though mediated by the unusual circumstances of deposition – are at least some of the contents of the Amman Airport structure. The location of some of these tombs within the settled sites (Kamid el-Loz, Dan) underscores their high status, since as a rule, intramural burial was discontinued early in the LBA and most of the old MBA families who had been using the hypogea beneath their town-houses were apparently dislodged.

A second category of elites would include people who derived elevated status from their association with Egypt, such as the occupants of the wealthiest anthropoid coffin burials at Deir el-Balah, the bench tombs at Far'ah, and the cist-graves at Tell es-Sa'idiya, with their amulets, jewelry and bronze wine-sets. The rich coastal burials associated with the Mediterranean trade, for example, at Tel Nami and Akko (the Persian Garden), can be classed with these as well, as they represent ascribed status of individuals associated with powerful foreign institutions.

Following these elite categories – all of them creations of the LBA Levantine interaction sphere – we arrive at the “lower” echelons in the burial hierarchy, where status differentiation is muted. These include, in the first instance, collective tombs – near towns or at a distance from them – that exhibit continuity over a long period, sometimes spanning the Middle and Late Bronze transition. Unlike their MBA predecessors, collective tombs of the LBA often have the appearance of passive repositories, rather than places of active commemoration; they contain remains of hundreds of individual burials and associated objects, usually showing little semblance of order. Representative examples of this type include Tomb 62 at Pella, Tombs I and II at 'Ara, and the cave-tomb of Dominus Flevit, near Jerusalem.¹⁷⁴ Tomb 62 at Pella consisted of three rock-cut chambers used early in the MB II for food processing, before being converted into burial chambers late in the MBA. Fragmentary skeletal remains of 100–150 individuals were accompanied by about 1,200 ceramic vessels (with many Chocolate-on-White bowls and jugs and several Cypriot imports of the LB IA), stone vessels (mainly calcite alabaster), 56 scarabs (mostly of the MBA), bone inlays and numerous personal adornments. The Dominus Flevit tomb, about 400 meters northeast of the southeast hill of early Jerusalem, was a bilobate tomb of MB II date that remained in use well into the LB II. With upward of 2,000 vessels interred (there are no data on the human remains), accompanied by a few Cypriot and Mycenaean imports and stone alabaster, it evidently served as a communal repository during a time when evidence for settlement in the walled area of

Jerusalem is flimsy. The 'Ara tombs, a few hundred meters distant from Tell 'Ara in the Wadi 'Ara pass, between the coast and the Jezreel Valley, were complex chamber tombs, either cut in the IBA and completely emptied prior to their reuse or hewn in the MBA in an "archaic" style. Fragmentary remains of about 100 individuals were identified in the partly looted tombs, but the original number is assumed to be much higher. They were accompanied by about 1,500 ceramic vessels spanning the entire MB and most of the LB ages. There were considerable quantities of imports, mainly Cypriot, in both the MB and LB (more in the latter), and only a few additional objects such as scarabs, personal ornaments, weapons and bone inlays. Significant quantities of mammal remains suggest the ritual consumption of meat as part of the funerary ritual in certain phases of use.

There are many caves of this general type described by Gonen, extending to the Transjordanian plateau (e.g., Amman, Umm ed-Dananir and Madaba).¹⁷⁵ Those adjacent to sites (e.g., Tomb 216 at Lachish, Tombs 911–912 at Megiddo, Tomb 10A at Gezer) were almost invariably reused tombs of the late third or early second millennium. Those away from the sites – whether in outlying fields of known sites or in areas where no contemporary settlement has been identified – could be reused or natural caves and might be interpreted as a form of territorial claim, whether by land-owners or by disenfranchised groups. There is no clear distinction in terms of wealth between the "urban" and "non-urban" tombs; they may include imported Cypriot and Aegean vessels, weapons, jewelry and unique objects, for example, the tomb at Jedur in the Hebron hills,¹⁷⁶ unrelated to any known LBA settlement, which produced Minoan and Mycenaean kraters, two intentionally bent sickle swords, a gold Egyptian signet-ring and numerous other ceramic and metal artifacts, and T. 912 at Megiddo, which has, in addition to its local and imported ceramics and bronzes, a collection of weights reminiscent of the coastal merchants' tombs.¹⁷⁷ However, because of the collective nature of the interments and the extended period of use, the wealth in these tombs is cumulative and distributed, rather than personal. Moreover, the sheer numbers of vessels and skeletal fragments and the lack of order in their deposit suggest that the tombs were no longer maintained by individual families, but served as communal repositories for more extended groups.

The other tomb type where status differentiation was limited includes the widely distributed individual pit burials found along the coast, from Sidon to Deir el-Balah, and in the interior plains and valleys.¹⁷⁸ In the pit-burial cemeteries, numerous graves with simple goods and occasional objects of value are often found alongside wealthier tombs of the Persian Garden or Deir el-Balah type. Simple individual burials have cropped up in marginal regions as well, such as those introduced into the old dolmens and megalithic structures of the Golan plateau.¹⁷⁹

Comparing the LBA with earlier periods, two kinds of disparity are evident: wealth disparities between the thin stratum of elite burials and the mass of

ordinary burials in caves or pit-graves, and cultural disparity between the tombs that preserve communal commemorative functions and rituals and those that do not. The two kinds of disparity partly overlap: the tombs exhibiting the greatest wealth are generally those that accrue their status through the Levantine network of local elites or through their association with Egypt, whereas the tombs that retain the values of ancestral commemoration are materially poorer and overpopulated. Moreover, commemoration inside the towns is allowed only to the chosen few, whereas the bulk of the population has been banished to the margins of the towns or even further afield. At the bottom of the ladder are the individual graves of those who had access neither to power nor to collective institutions. These are usually found grouped around elite burials, presumably indicating that whatever status they had was derived from their association with the wealthy. The marked devaluation of ancestral kinship ties and the promotion of individual status is entirely consistent with other material expressions of LBA social identity, while posing a stark contrast to earlier periods in the Levant, when the collective idiom was dominant.

THE END OF THE LBA AND THE TRANSITION TO THE IRON AGE

If the LBA trajectory is described in material, political and organizational terms, beginning with the collapse of the MBA system, its end should be defined as the point in time when the LBA package unravels: when relations of production are redefined, when dominant forms of organization gave way to new ones. But, as the Coen brothers' Hobie Doyle might say, "Would that t'were so simple!" As we have seen, there were several organizational principles at work in the LBA Levant, two of them complementary and dominant and others subordinate. The dominant parameters were the local Levantine elite network that had begun to take shape in the MBA and Egyptian political hegemony, which imposed itself on and exploited the same network. Subordinate systems included pre-existing corporate kin-based structures, the ritual landscape and the agricultural infrastructure. The "official" end of the LBA could be affixed to either one – or to both – of the dominant ordering parameters – the "demise of Canaanite city-states" and the "collapse of Egyptian hegemony" (with a third parameter, "the end of the Mediterranean world-system," lurking in the background). But these are neither internally nor mutually consistent, in chronological terms: Levantine palatial centers began to give way in the late thirteenth century (Hazor, Kamid el-Loz) and major towns suffered destruction and abandonment throughout the thirteenth and twelfth centuries, while the rapid withdrawal of Egypt from the Levant seems to have been effected between the final days of Ramesses III (c. 1155 BCE) and the last quarter of the twelfth century (see Table 6.3). The cessation of large-scale imports from the west occurred in the late thirteenth century,

Table 6.3 Selected Late LBA destructions

Thirteenth-century destructions	Early twelfth-century destructions	Late twelfth-century destructions
Hazor (Zuckerman 2007a)	Kamid el-Loz (Adler and Penner 2001)	Bet She'an VI (Panitz-Cohen and Mazar 2009)
Afeq (Gadot 2010)	Batash VI (Panitz-Cohen 2006)	Lachish VI (Ussishkin 2004b, c)
	Ashdod (Dothan and Ben- Shlomo 2005)	Azekah (Webster et al. 2017)
	Deir Alla (Mazar 2009)	Megiddo VIIA (Toffolo et al. 2014)
		Jaffa (Burke et al. 2017)
		Pella (Bourke 2012)

although most coastal sites, especially in the north, continued to function into the twelfth century and beyond it, and some imported pottery found its way from Cyprus to the Levant and vice-versa, as did other objects.¹⁸⁰ So even in terms of the dominant parameters, the “end” of the LBA was more than a century in the making.

If, however, we look at the subordinate ordering parameters of LBA society, they can provide a narrative of continuity and possibly even of rejuvenation emerging from the breakdown of Egyptian and elite hegemony, deferring the end of the LBA to the final decades of the second millennium BCE. The seeds of renewal were, in fact, planted in the waning years of intensified Egyptian intervention in the southern Levant. Previous to that time, over the first three centuries of the LBA, the archaeological evidence points to social stasis; a threadbare settlement system comprised of a small cadre of agricultural producers dominated by a wafer-thin stratum of elite families and their supporting cast of charioteers, craftsmen and peripatetic scribes. The ruling families were largely supported by small external contributions that allowed them to maintain a strategic network of prestige-goods exchange. The contributions were presumably provided by the Egyptian overlords in return for political services, hospitality, protection of caravans and the occasional supply of staple products for Egyptian expeditions. Marginalized groups had a limited archaeological footprint, but resistance to the ruling families and to their Egyptian allies might be behind the frequent evidence for violent conflict throughout the LBA. When Nineteenth Dynasty rulers began to augment the presence of Egyptian military and administrative personnel in southern Canaan (as attested by increased Egyptian pottery production, the spread of Egyptian burial practices, the increased presence of Egyptian contributions to local temples and the likely construction of several administrative centers), new economic opportunities emerged, leading to an increase in settlement in the southern coastal plain and the Jezreel and central Jordan Valleys, recorded both

at excavated and surveyed sites and cemeteries.¹⁸¹ The expansion of the settlement system may well have been enabled by reabsorption of marginalized groups into urban and village sites, as well as by a trickle of migrants/refugees¹⁸² from various parts of Western Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean, who have left archaeological clues to their presence in the form of burial containers and consumption habits. This growing population would, already in the thirteenth century, have challenged the existing political and economic template by reasserting the economic leverage of staple production. Any surpluses, however, would have been absorbed by the Egyptian imperial administration, as recorded on the inscribed hieratic bowls from various sites of the southern plain.

The century-long, conflict-marred process that led to the final collapse of the old order left the swelling population of the southern Levant in flux: freed from earlier constraints but lacking a unifying political framework. The archaeology of the Transitional Bronze–Iron Age (TBI) records four regional responses to the new reality.

Philistia

Along the southern coast and in the Shephelah, there is a considerable shift in the settlement pattern, with the gradual emergence of new urban polities during the late twelfth and eleventh centuries, that absorbed most – if not all – of the previous population.¹⁸³ These new polities, widely excavated at Ashqelon, Ashdod, Ekron (Tel Mique) and Gat (Tell es-Safi), evince strong evidence of contact with migrants of Cypriot (and ultimately Aegean) as well as Anatolian (Cilician) origin, and are generally termed “Philistine” – a first-millennium BCE term for people from the Land of the Philistines (Philistia), that is, the southern coastal plain.¹⁸⁴ In the early phase of these polities, their economy was based on staple finance and their political organization on a corporate political strategy, as expressed in public construction projects and the absence of elite differentiation.¹⁸⁵ Later, in the eleventh century, settlement expanded northward, to the Yarkon basin, which had been virtually abandoned for most of the twelfth century.¹⁸⁶ The material culture and ritual practices of these settlements creatively meld traditional LBA elements with Mediterranean elements in a package that may be said to come into its own in the eleventh century BCE.¹⁸⁷

Central Hills and Transjordanian Plateau

In the central hills, the few surviving chiefly centers were replaced or augmented with a network of hundreds of small agricultural villages composed of similar household units, each village specializing in an aspect of production to which its environment was best suited and engaging in exchange with similar

sites in other regions.¹⁸⁸ The material culture of these sites is a slimmed-down selection of functional LBA types, markedly lacking the typical “Canaanite” decoration (see box below on “Decorated South Levantine Pottery”). Sites along the central ridge are marked by great numbers of storage jars and collared-rim pithoi, probably used for storage of olive oil. Open-air cult sites seem to continue, albeit in a modest way, LBA practices of periodic commemoration and feasting.¹⁸⁹ The chronological range of the hill settlements extends from the late thirteenth to the eleventh centuries, before they begin to morph into the fortified Iron Age settlements that are attributed to the emergent kingdoms of Israel and Judah. As with the Philistines, the existence of the later kingdoms has been used to label the earlier hill settlement as “Israelite.”¹⁹⁰ On the Transjordanian plateau, an expansion of settlement through the last two centuries of the second millennium has been interpreted by Bruce Routledge¹⁹¹ to represent the departure of people from the contracting LBA sphere (which had been limited, to begin with, to small settlement clusters) to “new communities, focused on mutual defense and subsistence security,” and bearing “an ideology of categorical equality between domestic groups.”¹⁹²

Jezreel and Jordan Valleys

Existing LBA centers – for example, Yoqne’am, Megiddo, Tel Bet Shean and Tel Rehov – recovered from twelfth-century destructions and were rebuilt as non-palatial settlements.¹⁹³ Kempinski describes Stratum VIA at Megiddo as a small “Israelite” village, which is transformed into a “Philistine” regional center in Stratum VIB, whereas Finkelstein, Ussishkin and Halpern describe it as a rural town composed of estate-holders whose wealth was based on various productive activities and commodity trade (represented by several merchants’ or founders’ bronze hoards).¹⁹⁴ All agree that it continued to exhibit “second millennium” material culture until its destruction around the turn of the millennium.¹⁹⁵ Village sites excavated in the Jezreel Valley also appear to show continuity, barely registering the political changes of the twelfth century.¹⁹⁶ At Tel Bet Shean, as we have seen, the late Stratum VI rebuild probably included the “double temple,” reoriented to the east, with its cult stands and reinstated Egyptian stela and statues. Panitz-Cohen comments at length on the material continuity between the twelfth and eleventh centuries at this site, and Mazar states that, archaeologically, the valley sites remain “Canaanite” until the end of the millennium.¹⁹⁷

The Phoenician Coast

Susan Sherratt has proposed that the end of imperially controlled bulk trade in the Mediterranean ushered in a period of small-scale mercantile activity

between Cyprus and the Levant.¹⁹⁸ Her general proposition is certainly supported by the ceramic sequences at Tel Dor, Tel Keisan, Tyre, Sarepta and Arqa, which show continuous development and some evidence for trade (with Cyprus and, at Dor, with Egypt!) and exploitation of maritime resources (with the caveat that there is a poor fit between ceramic and radiocarbon chronologies for the twelfth to eleventh centuries).¹⁹⁹ It is borne out in Cyprus as well, where the evidence for importation and local production of Levantine wares is widespread.²⁰⁰ However, as noted by Gilboa, the existence of these ties did not lead to the elaborate stylistic entanglements that affected ceramic production in Philistia. Rather, maritime activity was absorbed in the fabric of the evolving mercantile powerhouses that became known, later in the first millennium, as Phoenician, and which preserved – more than any other part of the Levant – an explicit Canaanite identity.

Each of these four responses exhibits a greater or lesser degree of material and structural continuity with what came before, that is, with the productive stratum of late LBA society, which owed little to the political hegemonies whose primary interest was self-preservation. But this is not the same as stating that there was an underlying “Canaanite” essence that had survived untouched since the sixteenth century BCE. Too many regions had been depopulated, too many people displaced and transplanted, and too many social bonds disrupted.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the mortuary landscape; in no region do we see a return to MBA practices. “Philistine” burial practices are a virtual blank: there is evidence for reuse of LBA burial caves at Tell el-Far’ah, and there is a possible late second millennium cave at Tell es-Safi,²⁰¹ but for the most part, no cemeteries can be assigned to major twelfth- to eleventh-century sites of Philistia. The same is true of the central hills village settlements and, barring a few exceptions, for the valley and coastal populations. While the absence of centralized, traditional burial grounds can be explained in a number of ways, economic and ideological, it is clear that TBI settlements, whatever their regional configuration, no longer felt bound to previous commemorative or territorial conventions. The prolonged rupture brought about by the LBA political structures effectively dismantled whatever collective, kin-based territorial allegiances that may have survived the MBA collapse, while the intraregional and interregional migrations of the LBA meant that the new forms of organization were not experienced as contiguous with remote antiquity. In this sense, then, the last 150 years of the second millennium are, truly, transitional.

Another, related realm of pointed change was in the “interlocked nature of power and religion.”²⁰² As long as the great tells continued to function as *axes mundi*, LBA rulers could claim divine sanction, and the hierarchy, modeled on that of the gods, was maintained. But the fall of the great religious center of Hazor, followed by that of other mounds (e.g., Megiddo, Shechem, Lachish)

paved the way to a return to more diffuse and accessible divinities (a pathway that was never completely relinquished in the LBA). All the old temples, as well as the wayside shrines that had been coopted by Egyptian and local elites, were abandoned.

The TBI thus exposes its split personality: at the top of the pyramid, the patron–client relationships of the LBA were dismantled and, with them, the panoply of warrior-kings and the political economy of the exchange of gifts and of marriage partners, to be temporarily replaced by heterarchical structures pointing in different directions (Philistine towns, mercantile ports, agricultural villages). The indifference to mortuary commemoration points to the devaluation of charismatic patrimonial leadership and class distinctions, and to a change in the moral economy. At the base, however, material culture and technologies remained largely unchanged. One may even say that, in view of the new resurgence of staple and craft commodity production, the value of labor in the MBA mold was reinstated. Does this mean that the Iron I should be discarded, in concept and in practice, and the Bronze Age extended to the end of the millennium until a new dominant paradigm emerged? While I believe such a stance could be defended, it is certainly not a necessary conclusion. What is important is that, whatever the nature of its political transformations, “civilization” did not “collapse”; people in the Levant continued living their Bronze Age lives until new technologies, new relations of production and new forms of political legitimacy converged in the new, Iron Age, millennium.

Looking back at the inception of the LBA, it may seem a mystery, in view of the dramatic depopulation of the countryside and the sheer vulnerability of the remaining, unfortified centers, what it was that propped up Levantine polities and their rulers for three centuries (!). Surely there should be a limit to the persistence of inequality, to the enrichment of the rich and the impoverishment of the poor. Surely the incessant warfare and violent destructions should have destroyed the power of the local princes and warlords. It is indeed striking, as Cyprian Broodbank puts it, “how often the goose could be killed and still recover to lay yet more tributary golden eggs.”²⁰³ But writing in a world where inequality is incessantly on the rise and wealth seems to be manufactured out of whole cloth, the LBA reality may not be so hard to imagine. One way to understand it is through the integrated moral and political economy of craftsmanship, transport and gift exchange. Imagine a club so selective that membership in it immediately rewards one with inordinate prestige, with a powerful aura of success and invincibility. Members of this club recognize one another through the possession, exchange and conspicuous consumption of objects of exquisite craftsmanship in exotic media – elephant ivory, rare metals, amber – by means of the women that they control and deploy, and by means of hospitality in their well-appointed palaces and mansions. The most pressing need for the members of this club is access to

rare raw materials and the monopolization of craft specialists. Their staple needs are limited – the hard work of a small number of unskilled laborers answers most of their requirements, and they do not need to accumulate large quantities of such staples for trade or redistribution. The labor and loyalty of their few retainers can be assured by sharing their aura as patrons in public appearances and ceremonies, by public feasts, by bequests to temples, by token gifts, by grants of land (of which there was no shortage) or other forms of showing favor, and, if need be, by threats of economic sanctions or violence. The most prestigious Late Bronze Age club was that of the Great Kings of Egypt, Hatti and Babylon, and the gifts that they exchanged were of such a grand scale as to be economic engines of their own, providing a livelihood for thousands of crafts-laborers and netting the great palace enormous economic leverage within their own countries (including the transporting of staple goods, even across the sea). Some of this wealth trickled down to the Levantine club, whose members would have included the dynasties and leading families of places such as Hazor, Megiddo, Kumidi or Shechem. This trickle-down economy was sustainable so long as demographic trends were negative or stable – that is, through the fourteenth century, at least. Once economic and demographic recovery began in the mid-thirteenth century, the old order came under threat and new, more egalitarian or collective social arrangements began to evolve. The Transitional Bronze–Iron Age thus marks the end of the Bronze Age Levantine palace prestige economy, en route to the ethnic kingdoms of the Iron Age.

Decorated South Levantine Pottery

The introduction of Cypriot Wheelmade Bichrome and Lebanese Biqua' Chocolate-on-White wares in cultic and mortuary settings along the coastal plain and in the interior valleys at the very start of the LBA soon inspired local renderings of these same wares at south Levantine urban centers, setting the scene for a painted pottery tradition that is uniquely Late Bronze in conception and south Levantine in its geographic distribution.

The first phase of local production of bichrome decorated wares, as shown by Artzy,²⁰⁴ took the crucial step of limiting the zone of decoration on the typical jug or tankard to the sloped shoulder of the vessel, which was divided into several panels. Soon, the shapes of additional vessels were modified to allow a convenient surface for decorative painting: goblets, biconical jugs, kraters, amphoriskoi, storage jars and cultic stands. The restriction of the field of decoration to a band encircling the vessel created a surface suited for diorama-like panels that could be populated with static decorative motifs or dynamic narrative scenes (Figure 6.19). Additionally, the round interiors of bowls and chalices, or the convex exteriors of flasks, provided a medallion-shaped frame for similar scenes. In the Jordan Valley, the MBA forms of early Chocolate-on-White I were also remodeled locally in LB I to accommodate the panel decorations of Chocolate-on-White II.²⁰⁵



Figure 6.19 A biconical jug/amphora from Tel Yin'am and a jug from Tel el-Far'ah (South), bearing characteristic decorative panels that show horned animals and palm trees. Photos by C. Amit and M. Sucholowski. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The most popular theme the narrative scenes involved the “tree of life” motif: a naturalistic or stylized rendering of a palm tree, often laden with fruit, usually attended by paired animals: ibexes and birds being the most common. Occasionally, suckling goats, lions and human figures appear as well. A remarkable rendering of the motif appears on the headdress of the statue of Ba'al from the Palace Temple at Hazor. In her detailed study of this piece, Ornan elaborates on the iconographic relation between the palm motif, the female pubic triangle, horned animals and “notions of fertility, fecundity, and abundance of humans, animals, and plants alike.”²⁰⁶ At the base of this relation lies the quintessential notion that access to fertility is secured through the preservation of the political order and hierarchy.

LBA painted pottery flourished together with a wide array of decorative arts, and may be viewed as a Levantine counterpart to the hero- and marine-oriented iconography of Aegean ceramics. In the twelfth to eleventh centuries, as the LBA tradition began to fade away, some of its features were reincorporated in the last burst of iconographic creativity in the Levant – the bichrome Philistine ware of the southern coast, where Aegean and Levantine traditions combined to produce the last decorated wares before the onset of the Iron Age proper.

NOTES

- 1 Such as Higginbotham 2000; Morris 2005; Na'aman 2005a; Pfoh 2016; see also Chapter 1, section on “Principal Themes.”
- 2 Höflmayer 2017a.
- 3 Martin 2011; see Charaf 2007–2008 for a critique of the term.
- 4 Finné et al. 2011; Knapp and Manning 2016.

- 5 Kaniewski et al. 2013; 2015; Langgut, Finkelstein and Litt 2013.
- 6 Manning et al. 2014; see also Friedrich 2013.
- 7 Bronk Ramsey et al. 2010; Shortland and Bronk Ramsey 2013.
- 8 Pearson et al. 2018.
- 9 Petrie 1931–1934; Petrie, Mackay and Murray 1952.
- 10 Bergoffen 2001; 2002; Oren 2001.
- 11 Fischer and Sadeq 2000, 2002; Fischer 2004; 2009.
- 12 See also Seger 2011 on transitional cooking pots.
- 13 Fischer 1999; 2004; 2006.
- 14 Epstein 1966: 89–105; Kempinski 1989: 61–67; Franklin 2006; Gadot, Yasur-Landau and Ilan 2006.
- 15 See Martin 2009.
- 16 Kempinski 1989: 157–158, 167–168.
- 17 Zuckerman 2012.
- 18 Yadin et al. 1989: 150–165.
- 19 Yadin et al. 1960: 93.
- 20 Bonfil 1997; Ben-Tor et al. 2017.
- 21 Ben-Tor, Ben-Ami and Livneh 2005.
- 22 Mazar and Mullins 2007.
- 23 Stern 1984.
- 24 Panitz-Cohen and Mazar 2006.
- 25 Ussishkin 2004b.
- 26 Tufnell, Inge and Harding 1940.
- 27 Singer-Avitz 2004b.
- 28 Oren 1969; Yannai 2000; Yannai, Gorzcalczany and Peilstöcker 2003.
- 29 Barako 2007.
- 30 Smith and Potts 1992; Bourke, Sparks and Schroder 2006.
- 31 Yannai 2000.
- 32 Liverani 2014.
- 33 Gonen 1984.
- 34 Thalmann 2006.
- 35 Marfoe 1998: fig. 37 and p. 162.
- 36 Frankel et al. 2001.
- 37 Greenberg and Keinan 2009.
- 38 Strange 2001; Routledge 2004; Finkelstein 2014.
- 39 See, e.g., Finkelstein 1996a, b.
- 40 Eisenberg 1993b.
- 41 In the fourteenth century BCE, the occasional isolated, richly furnished LBA tomb found in outlying rural areas, away from any settlement, could well represent the territorial claims of such wealthy landowners (e.g., at Jedur: Ben-Arieh 1981, or Nahalat Ahim: Amiran 1960).
- 42 Liverani 2014: 271–289.
- 43 Blanton et al. 1996; Feinman 2000.

- 44 Blanton et al. 1996: 4.
- 45 For overviews, see Kemp 1978; Redford 1992; Hasel 1998; Higginbotham 2000; Goren, Finkelstein and Na'aman 2004; Morris 2005; Na'aman 2005a; Pfoh 2016.
- 46 E.g., Redford 1992; Na'aman 2005a; Pfoh 2016 and many others.
- 47 Cf. Braunstein 2011: 3.
- 48 Burke and Lords 2010; Peilstocker and Burke 2011; Burke et al. 2017.
- 49 Burke and Mandell 2011.
- 50 Oren 1987.
- 51 Burke et al. 2017.
- 52 It is likely that another such potter was active at contemporary Tell el-'Ajjul, but the stratigraphy and settlement history of that site remains, unfortunately, opaque; see Kopetzky 2011.
- 53 Rowe 1930; 1940; Mazar and Mullins 2007; Mullins 2012.
- 54 Martin 2009; 2011.
- 55 James and McGovern 1993; Mazar 2006a; Martin 2009; 2011; Panitz-Cohen and Mazar 2009; Mullins 2012.
- 56 Mazar 2006a.
- 57 Sweeney 2009.
- 58 Panitz-Cohen and Yahalom-Mack 2009; Yahalom-Mack and Panitz-Cohen 2009.
- 59 Jordan and Schrire 2002; Lucas 2006.
- 60 Jordan and Schrire 2002: 246.
- 61 Stoler 1991.
- 62 Oren 1973.
- 63 Pouls-Wegner 2015.
- 64 Panitz-Cohen 2009: 275.
- 65 Dothan and Brandl 2010.
- 66 Killebrew, Goldberg and Rosen 2006.
- 67 Martin 2011.
- 68 Dothan 1978; 2008.
- 69 Cf. Pouls-Wegner 2015.
- 70 Bryan 1996; Higginbotham 2000 and references therein.
- 71 Morris 2005: 350, 415; Daviau 2015.
- 72 Na'aman 2005b; Hachmann 2012.
- 73 Hachmann 1989; 1996.
- 74 Miron 1990.
- 75 E.g., Adler 1996; Lilyquist 1996.
- 76 Metzger 1993.
- 77 Sometimes termed "residences," after Oren 1984.
- 78 Petrie 1930; MacDonald, Starkey and Harding 1932.
- 79 Oren 1984; Bryan 1996; Lilyquist 1998; Higginbotham 2000; Braunstein 2011; E. Fischer 2011; Ben-Tor 2016.

- 80 Wimmer 1990; Goldwasser and Wimmer 1999; Levy 2017.
- 81 Braunstein 2011.
- 82 Tubb 1990b; 1995; Tubb and Dorrell 1993.
- 83 Pritchard 1980; Green 2006; 2009; 2011; Tubb and Cartwright 2014.
- 84 Gadot and Yadin 2009.
- 85 Owen 1981.
- 86 Na'aman and Goren 2009.
- 87 Gadot 2010.
- 88 Barako 2007.
- 89 Oren 1984.
- 90 Goldwasser 1984.
- 91 Rothenberg 1972; 1988; Ben-Yosef et al. 2012; Avner 2014; Erickson-Gini 2014; Ben-Yosef 2018.
- 92 Yekutieli and Cohen-Sasson 2010; also Yekutieli 2016; Sweeney 2018.
- 93 Schulman 1976; 1988.
- 94 Erickson-Gini 2014; Yekutieli 2016.
- 95 Bestock 2018.
- 96 Yadin 1972; Beck 2002c.
- 97 Ornan 2011; 2012; 2017.
- 98 Ornan 2012: 1.
- 99 Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg 2007; Ben-Tor 2016; Ben-Tor et al. 2017.
- 100 Lev-Tov and McGeogh 2006; Zuckerman 2010.
- 101 Connor et al. 2017.
- 102 Ornan 2017.
- 103 Yadin et al. 1958; 1960; Yadin 1972.
- 104 Beck 2002b.
- 105 Yadin 1972: 83.
- 106 Yadin 1972: 89.
- 107 Yadin et al. 1989: 264.
- 108 Zuckerman 2007b.
- 109 Cf. Kitchen 2003.
- 110 Stockhammer 2012.
- 111 Zuckerman 2008.
- 112 Zuckerman 2007a.
- 113 Zuckerman 2007a: 25.
- 114 According to the reconstructions of Kempinski (1989) and Herzog (1997).
- 115 Negbi 1970: 36.
- 116 Horowitz and Oshima 2006: 81.
- 117 Rainey 1999.
- 118 Loud 1939; Feldman 2009.
- 119 Bryan 1996; Lilyquist 1998; Fischer 2007; Feldman 2009.
- 120 Sherratt and Sherratt 1991.
- 121 Horowitz and Oshima 2006: 130–131.
- 122 Horowitz and Oshima 2006: 133.

- 123 Horowitz and Oshima 2006: 80–81.
- 124 Mazar 1997; Panitz-Cohen and Mazar 2006; Panitz-Cohen 2011.
- 125 Panitz-Cohen 2006: 192.
- 126 Daviau 1993: 323–360.
- 127 Bunimovitz, Lederman and Hatzaki 2013.
- 128 Ziffer, Bunimovitz and Lederman 2009.
- 129 See also Stockhammer 2016.
- 130 Barkay and Ussishkin 2004.
- 131 Ussishkin 2004c.
- 132 Tufnell, Inge and Harding 1940.
- 133 Cf. Bietak 2002b.
- 134 Hestrin 1987.
- 135 Finkelstein and Sass 2013; Sass et al. 2015; Goldwasser 2017.
- 136 Wimmer 1990; Martin 2011.
- 137 Ben-Tor 2016: fig. 46.
- 138 Ben-Tor 2016: fig. 39.
- 139 Tufnell 1958: pls. 45, 46; Goldwasser 1982; Ussishkin 2004d; Levy 2017.
- 140 Albright 1993; Greenberg 1987; Ben-Arieh 2004; Givon 2008.
- 141 Shai et al. 2011; Shai, McKinney and Uziel 2015; Lipschits, Gadot and Oeming 2017.
- 142 Routledge 2004: 82–85.
- 143 Franken 1992; 2008; van der Steen 2004; 2008.
- 144 Van der Steen 2008.
- 145 Harding 1958; Hennessy 1966; Hankey 1974a, b; Herr 1983; Mumford 2015.
- 146 Yadin et al. 1989: Plan 29.
- 147 Stockhammer 2012: 92–93; Zuckerman 2012.
- 148 Finkelstein, Bunimovitz and Lederman 1993: 43–47.
- 149 Mazar 1981; Edelstein, Milevsky and Auran 1998.
- 150 Cahill 2003; Killebrew 2003.
- 151 Shiloh 1984: 59–60.
- 152 Broodbank 2013: 391–404.
- 153 Routledge and McGeough 2009.
- 154 Vidal 2006.
- 155 Bachhuber 2006; Monroe 2010.
- 156 Hirschfeld 2011.
- 157 Doumet-Serhal 2009.
- 158 Bikai 1978.
- 159 Anderson 1988.
- 160 Artzy 2006.
- 161 Stidsing and Salmon 2011.
- 162 Serpico et al. 2003.
- 163 Ben-Arieh and Edelstein 1977.
- 164 Hamilton 1934; 1935; Balensi 1980; 1985; Artzy 2006.

- 165 These have been defined by Knapp and Demesticha (2016) as the Aegean counterpart of the “Canaanite” jar, the two comprising the LBA “Maritime Transport Containers” par excellence.
- 166 Artzy 1995; 2006; Brody 1998: 39–61.
- 167 Monroe 2009.
- 168 E.g., van Wijngaarden 2002; Greener 2014.
- 169 Fischer 2009.
- 170 Van Wijngaarden 2002: 75–97.
- 171 Gonen 1992a, c.
- 172 Seger 1988: 114–115.
- 173 Fischer, Bürge and Shalabi 2015.
- 174 Saller 1964; Smith and Potts 1992; Gadot 2014.
- 175 Harding 1953; McGovern 1986.
- 176 Ben-Arieh 1981; Hankey 1981b.
- 177 Guy 1938: 69–72, pls. 123–134.
- 178 Gonen 1992a: 70–97.
- 179 Epstein 1985; Mizrahi et al. 1996.
- 180 Sherratt 2003.
- 181 Bunimovitz 1995; Finkelstein 1996a, b; Jasmin 2006.
- 182 See Burke 2018.
- 183 Finkelstein 1996b.
- 184 Killebrew 2005; Yasur-Landau 2010; Maeir, Hitchcock and Horwitz 2013.
- 185 Yasur-Landau 2010: 295–307.
- 186 Gadot 2008.
- 187 Laemmel 2009.
- 188 Lederman 1999.
- 189 Mazar 1982; Zertal 1986–1987.
- 190 Finkelstein 1994; Faust 2006.
- 191 Routledge 2004: 58–114.
- 192 Routledge 2004: 113; see also Porter 2013.
- 193 Mazar 2008.
- 194 Kempinski 1989; Finkelstein, Ussishkin and Halpern 2006b.
- 195 Finkelstein 2003.
- 196 Dessel 1999.
- 197 Mazar 2008; Panitz-Cohen 2009.
- 198 S. Sherratt 2003.
- 199 Gilboa and Sharon 2003; Gilboa 2005; Charaf 2007–2008.
- 200 Bell 2009.
- 201 Braunstein 2011; Maeir 2012.
- 202 Kristiansen and Larsson 2005.
- 203 Broodbank 2013: 407.
- 204 Artzy, Perelman, and Asaro 1978; Artzy 2001.
- 205 Fischer 1999.
- 206 Ornan 2011: 267; see also Choi 2016.

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF THE BRONZE AGE LEVANT

Things duplicate themselves on Tlön; they also tend to grow vague or “sketchy,” and to lose detail when they begin to be forgotten. The classic example is the doorway that continued to exist so long as a certain beggar frequented it, but which was lost to sight when he died. Sometimes a few birds, a horse, have saved the ruins of an amphitheater.¹ (J.L. Borges)

To conclude this story, on the cusp of the Iron Age, it may be well to cast a backward glance at the two and a half millennia of the Bronze Age, asking, from this vantage point, what changed, what stayed the same, and what was passed on to the following eras.

Despite humble beginnings, at a time when the concepts of urban and state formation could not have had any purchase in a dispersed, mid-third-millennium village society, Early Bronze IA communities laid the foundations for the later “evolution of simplicity” that allowed the coordinated activity of larger numbers of people. They did so by embracing the Mediterranean agricultural package – cereals, olive and vine – as the mainstay of their economy, turning their back on the Chalcolithic insistence on maintaining a large “ceremonial fund,”² and putting their faith in improved agricultural technique – the adoption of the traction complex (cattle, donkey and plow) – and efficient use of manual labor (flywheels and ceramic turntables). The option of the scattered and, later, the nucleated agricultural village, based on mixed small-holder farming and animal husbandry, has remained a default value for Levantine communities, although individual villages are established and abandoned all the time.

Increasing internal tensions, as villages grew, coupled with more regular encounters with neighboring societies – especially those that were expanding their reach toward the Mediterranean littoral – led to the remarkable adoption, c. 3000 BCE, of elements of the early state: integrated systems composed of fortified towns and villages that carried on intensive intraregional interactions, established commodity industries and cultivated shared ideologies. Never fully

centralized and always exhibiting weak administrative control, corporate polities like those of the EB II, or, more typically, hybrid polities based on a limited class of elite actors who employed “corporate strategies”³ to preserve their legitimacy and carry out public works (as in EB III), were added to the political calculus of subsequent times. These Levantine polities, which are often characterized as “just short” of being towns and states, are the foundation for later political entities: whether kingdoms, city-states, principalities or fiefdoms.

Technological advances made in neighboring regions always seem to have arrived late in the Bronze Age Levant, but when they arrived, they were adopted with gusto (first by elites and, after a lag, by commoners): wheeled transport seems to have been introduced just after 2900 BCE, a few hundred years after it was invented, by migrants with roots in the southern Caucasus (“Khirbet Kerak people”), but became widespread only much later. Bronze came into regular use only halfway through the “Bronze Age,” c. 2000 BCE; writing arrived soon after (more than a millennium after its original conception), but was not widely employed in the Levant (probably for lack of a bureaucratic context in all but a few locations, the most notable exception being MBA Hazor). The Levantine capacity for translation and “mis-copying,” however, is clearly on display in an unintentional innovation – the creation of the pictographic alphabet, which was the foundation for all Iron Age literature in the Levant.

While political and economic systems fluctuated rapidly throughout the Levantine Bronze Age, there was one realm of human endeavor that seems to have progressed linearly: the capacity for violence. In the third millennium, despite the presence of massive fortifications, there is no evidence that towns and their inhabitants engaged regularly in warfare: there are virtually no weapons in the archaeological record, little evidence of physical trauma, and few human-induced destructions. The post-urban Intermediate Bronze Age marks the emergence of a class of armed males – its origin rooted, perhaps, in the necessities of survival in a sparsely inhabited countryside – that soon attained elevated status. The cult of the “warrior” is even more pronounced in the early second millennium, when lethal bronze weapons were introduced into the Levant. But – like in the third millennium – it seems that, after the initial expansion of settlement led by a militaristic elite, the stable power of collectively built fortified enclosures ensured several centuries of relative peace, with “battles” conducted perhaps only by representative champions of the sides in the conflict. A new wave of technological improvements in warfare, including the introduction of composite bows and chariots in the middle of the second millennium, seems, however, to have energized the ambitions of the powerful kingdoms surrounding the Levant, inciting cyclical violence within the region. This violence, whether sanctioned by state actors or their opponents, was perpetrated – to a large extent – by professional soldiers. At this time,

swords, spears and arrows become household items, accompanying people through life and death. “Middle Eastern unrest” was here to stay.

Alongside the organizational and technological innovations of the Levantine Bronze Age, there were some tendencies and qualities that persisted, taking on the features of a recurrent regional trait. It was suggested in Chapter 1 that the geographic characteristics of the Levant are such that the stakes involved in rapid political change are relatively low: it is difficult to amass great wealth or power, and the productivity of the land neither requires nor allows the maintenance of large bureaucracies. This underlying constraint permitted the Bronze Age communities of the Levant to be politically creative: they could adopt new systems – or elements of such systems – quickly and abandon them with relative ease. Moreover, they most likely saw through the pretensions of power of local actors, ensuring that they never got “too big.” (The flip-side of this state-avoidance was the ease with which the Levant could be taken over by aggressive imperial actors from the south and, eventually, from the north and west.) The creative aspect of Levantine communities calls to mind Fustel de Coulange’s description of another Mediterranean region (Greece), where “a city was never formed by degrees, by the slow increase in the number of men and houses. They founded a city at once, all entire in a day.” This resonates quite well with the two town-building phases of the Levantine Bronze Age (EB II and MB I), where people could begin life in a village landscape and end it in an urbanizing one. What is especially telling is Fustel’s realization that the new civic identity was only stretched over the previous ones (hearth, family, phratry, tribe), without doing away with them.⁴ This allowed these same communities to disaggregate (IBA, LB I), without necessarily risking starvation, banishment and death. In archaeological terms, these tendencies translate into a pointed lack of continuity at most settlement sites: the fact that people returned, time and again, to a specific location does not generally imply that it was the same community that had been implanted there from time immemorial. Each iteration of settlement represents a new structural context, and often a new cultural one as well.

A second commonality of Levantine Bronze Age communities – or at least some of them – is their readiness to absorb ideas, values, technologies and people (with their associated languages, techniques and cuisines) from neighboring regions. This is not a passive receptivity, but a creative one. In the foregoing pages, it can be seen as the engine for advancing urbanism in the early EBA, for the adoption of Syrian values and entering into a creative exchange of commodities and people with the north in the late third and early second millennia (IBA–MBA), for the creative reworking of Egyptian techniques and symbols throughout the second millennium (including the creation of the alphabet), for the absorption of migrating individuals and communities in nearly every age, and, most potently of all, for the adoption

and recreation through translation of the personified gods, who were destined to play a transformative role in the following millennium.

The Levantine Bronze Age innovations, as well as the permanent characteristics of the region, did not disappear during the transformations that ushered in the Iron Age. They remained either as palimpsests (like the ruined mounds themselves) or as submerged organizing parameters of later political and economic institutions. In fact, many – like the olive and vine – remain powerful to this very day.

The Bronze Age Levant has been the object of sustained and intensive archaeological investigation since the latter half of the nineteenth century. Its location on the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard, at the edges of the earliest civilizations and at the nexus of some of the most significant innovations in human cultural, social and spiritual evolution, combine to keep it in both the scientific and public eye in these times as well. Yet for those of us engaged in recovering, interpreting or presenting the materiality of Bronze Age remains in the present-day territories of Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, their continued existence can hardly be taken for granted. Where alternative, often antagonistic, and historically compelling narratives and performances of national and ethnic pasts occupy so large a space, where antiquities are demolished for almost any reason at all, archaeologists are often the beggars in the ruined doorway, the birds and the horse – to borrow Borges's imagery in the fable of the planet Tlön – through whose imagination forgotten things continue to exist. The future of the Bronze Age lies in the telling of it, and in the distant reflection it offers of our own lives and of our deepest concerns.

NOTES

- 1 J.L. Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in *Fictions*, trans. A. Hurley. London: Penguin (1998).
- 2 Wolf 1966.
- 3 Blanton et al. 1996.
- 4 Fustel de Coulanges 1956: 134.

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INDEX

- Abil al-Qamh (Abel Bet Ma'acah), 217, 232
 Abu Hawam, Tell, 330–331, 334
 Abu al-Kharaz, Tell, 47–48, 55, 65, 72, 75–76, 94, 225, 263, 277
 Abu an-Niaj, Tell, 138, 141, 150
 Abydos, 45, 58
 Afeq, Tel, 75, 193, 197, 204, 206, 209–212, 302, 305–307
 Afridar. *See* Ashqelon
 Afula, 117, 151, 197
 'Ai (et-Tell), 50, 75, 103, 109, 114–115, 145, 176, 238
 'Ain Ghazal, 15
 'Ain Samiya, 145, 165, 171, 189, 197, 256
 silver cup, 164, 175–176
 'Ain Zurekiya, 219
 'Ajjul, Tell el-, 8, 144, 165–166, 197, 225, 228, 245–247, 250, 252, 259–261, 263–264, 276, 302, 335, 337
 Akhziv, Tel, 225, 235
 Akko, Tel, 189, 208–209, 215, 235, 330, 332
 Persian Garden, 331, 333, 339
 Alalakh, 234, 272, 317
 'Alawina, Khirbat ('Alona), 242
 Albright, William Foxwell, 1, 10, 117, 137, 174, 217
 'Amal, Tel, 165, 171
 Amarna letters, 274, 288, 300, 323, 329–330
 Amiran, Ruth, 85, 138
 Amman, 11, 340
 airport, 321, 326, 328, 335, 339
 Amorite, Amorites, 159, 174, 181, 187–188, 187, 228, 236, 311, 338
 anthropoid coffins, 289, 294, 297–299, 304, 325, 338
 Arabah Valley, 4, 29, 34–35, 38, 56, 90, 123, 142, 162, 167, 226, 253, 308
 Arad, 28, 61, 72, 75, 77, 79–81, 83–85, 88, 90–91, 94
 Arqa, Tell, 72, 74, 96, 124–126, 139, 141, 146, 189, 193, 197, 205, 283, 345
 Ashdod, Tel (Isdud), 225, 250, 343
 Asherat, 93
 Ashqelon, 32, 34, 38, 45
 Tel, 208–209, 212–215, 219, 221, 244, 250, 257, 343
 Assawir, 30, 46, 50–51, 56, 93, 165
 Avdon, Tel, 235
 Azekah, Tel (Tell Zakariya), 326
 Azor, 26, 28, 34, 50–51, 54, 165
 Bab edh-Dhra', 9, 28, 35–36, 40–42, 50, 75, 86, 93, 96–97, 108, 112, 145–146, 165
 Badia, 29
 Balua', 326
 Banat, Tell (Syria), 168, 258
 Bareqet, Tel, 72, 75, 78, 81, 84, 94
 Barnea. *See* Ashqelon
 Barqai, 256
 Basta, 15
 Batash, Tel, 278, 280, 321–323, 326
 Batrawy, Khirbat al-, 96–97, 103, 105, 109
 Battir (Khirbat al-Yahudiya), 242
 Be'er Resisim, 123, 159–161
 Beirut, 8, 189, 209, 283
 Beit Mirsim, Tell, 8, 217, 225, 252, 260–261, 326
 Bet Dagan, 165
 Bet Shean, Tel (Tell el-Husn), 8, 26, 28, 47, 55, 57, 64, 96–97, 117, 141, 145, 165, 193, 225, 256, 263, 278–280, 284, 289, 291–297, 300, 302, 309, 338, 344
 Bet Shemesh, Tel ('Ain Shams), 225, 321–323, 326, 334
 Bet Yerah, Tel (Kh. el-Kerak), 34, 36, 42, 46–47, 54–56, 65, 71, 74–75, 78, 81–83, 86, 88, 91, 93, 96–97, 100, 102–103, 110–111, 114–121, 126, 139, 144, 156, 170, 194, 196
 Bethel (Beitin), 243
 biblical archaeology, 1–2, 8, 10, 12
 Biqu', 4, 6, 11, 29, 139, 141, 157–158, 165, 189, 225, 232, 251, 263, 283, 286, 288, 301, 347
 Bosra, 225, 232, 254
 bronze
 craft, 2, 104, 116, 193, 203, 226, 240, 344
 cymbals, 322, 331
 drinking straws, 323
 fittings, 248
 mirrors, 198, 331, 333
 plaques, 193, 310–312, 314, 325, 331
 statuettes, 201–203, 231, 250, 301, 311–312, 314, 316, 322, 329, 332
 tools, 105
 tribute, 185, 233

- bronze (cont.)
 vessels, 202, 297, 299, 305, 332, 335, 339
 weapons, 170, 192, 197–199, 201, 204–205, 207,
 210, 243, 301, 303, 323, 328, 331, 333, 355
 weights, 331
 Bronze Age, definition, 2–3, 20
 Burak, Tell el-, 183, 189, 217–218, 221, 225
 Burga, Tel, 209, 215, 225, 234
 burials, 15, 17
 Early Bronze IA, 39–42
 Early Bronze IB, 50–52
 Early Bronze II, 93–94
 Early Bronze III, 97, 112–113, 123
 Intermediate Bronze Age, 140, 145, 164–173, 176
 Middle Bronze Age warrior burials, 197–200
 Middle Bronze I, 190–193, 215, 219, 228
 Middle Bronze II, 233, 240–241, 255–262
 Late Bronze Age, 281, 297–298, 301, 304–305,
 331, 336–341
 Transitional Bronze–Iron Age, 345
 Burna, Tel (Tell Burnat), 326
 Buto, 58
 Byblos, 9, 12, 28, 42, 50, 70, 74, 95–96, 122, 124,
 126, 137, 141, 145, 147, 186, 189, 198, 200–203,
 209, 220, 222, 225, 259–260, 300, 330
 ceramics
 Black Wheelmade ware, 155, 157
 Chocolate-on-White, 263, 277–278, 282, 347
 Cypriot, 212, 219, 221, 246, 257, 263, 276–277,
 279–282, 284, 322–324, 329, 332–335, 347
 Early Bronze IA, 35–37
 Early Bronze IB, 52–55
 Early Bronze II, 86–93
 Early Bronze III, 113, 117–120
 Egyptian, 59–60, 289, 292, 294–298, 306
 Gray Burnished, 26, 29, 36, 54, 58
 Intermediate Bronze Age, 139, 154–158
 Khirbet Kerak ware, 117–121
 Late Bronze I, 276, 280, 282, 284
 Late Bronze II, 322, 324, 327, 335, 340, 347–348
 Levantine Metallic ware, 55, 86–88, 91, 124–125
 Levantine Painted ware, 204–205
 Middle Bronze I, 192, 194, 196, 206, 212
 Middle Bronze II, 226–228
 Tell el-Yahudiya ware, 196, 213, 221, 228, 249,
 282
 Chalcolithic (Ghassulian/Beersheba) period, 15–18,
 28–29
 climate and climate change, 7, 15, 25, 76, 139, 174,
 183–184, 275
 collective ethos
 collective burials, 50, 112, 148, 166, 168–169, 215,
 258, 339–340
 collective ideology, 19, 26, 52, 94, 113, 154,
 170–171, 188, 285, 341, 347
 collective labor, 30, 34, 43–44, 50, 56, 109, 148,
 154, 209, 211, 236–237, 286, 355
 commodities, 3, 35, 56, 60, 70–71, 75, 86, 91, 94,
 130, 164, 192, 204, 221, 235, 329, 332, 344, 346,
 354, 356
 copper, 17, 28, 32, 34, 38, 56, 61, 81, 91, 123, 153,
 162–163, 167, 185, 253, 308
 Cypriot, 221, 309
 fittings, 170, 248
 ingots, 153, 160, 163, 167
 pins, 170
 tools, 30, 35, 38, 47–48, 62, 91, 154, 160, 168
 weapons, 62, 115, 154, 160, 167, 170, 176, 321
 crisis architecture, 317
 cuneiform. *See* literacy
 Cyprus, 8, 220–221, 263, 274, 276, 286, 316, 330,
 342, 345
 Dab'a, Tell ed-, 181, 183, 197, 199, 213, 221, 245,
 262
 Dalit, Tel, 75, 77
 Dan (Tell el-Qadi), 74, 96, 101, 141, 145, 189,
 208–209, 215, 217, 232, 335, 337–338
 Dayr 'Ayn Abata, 254
 Deir 'Alla, Tell, 225, 321, 326–327
 Deir el-Balah, 289, 298–300, 302, 309, 338–340
 Dhahr Mirzbaneh. *See* 'Ain Samiya
 dolmens, 52, 141, 165, 167, 193, 340
 Dominus Flevit. *See* Jerusalem, Mount of Olives
 Dor, Tel, 345
 Dothan, Tel, 96, 225
 drink
 beverage consumption, 88, 156, 168, 190, 202,
 235, 248, 323–324, 332
 drinking vessels, 36, 147–148, 151, 155, 157, 172,
 192, 200, 202, 226, 228, 235, 324, 327
 Ebla, 2, 127, 137, 164, 174, 176, 201, 247
 Efrata, 165, 172, 189
 Egypt
 First Dynasty, 72, 88, 91
 First Intermediate Period, 138, 162
 Hyksos, 180–181, 222, 244, 247, 250, 262, 264
 Middle Kingdom, 182, 185–187, 200, 222, 226,
 261
 New Kingdom empire, 287–289, 299–300,
 309–310. *See* Bet Shean, Deir el-Balah, Jaffa,
 Tell el-Far'ah (South), Tell es-Sa'idiya, Afeq,
 Tell esh-Sharia'
 Old Kingdom, 91, 124–125, 219
 predynastic, 19–21, 25, 43
 predynastic colony in SW Canaan, 57–64
 'Ein el-Hilu, 141, 149–150, 157
 Ekron, 343
 'En Besor, 45, 60, 65
 'En Hanaziv, 55
 'En Shadud, 45, 47
 'En Yahav, 163
 'En Zippori, 48
 'En Ziq, 123, 159–162
 'Enan, 170–171
 Erani, Tel (Sheikh al-'Areini), 28, 44, 60, 62, 120, 128
 Erani C horizon, 44–45, 52, 58
 Eshta'ol Junction, 45
 Execration, 185–187, 397
 Execration Texts, 185–187
 Fadous-Kfarabida, Tell, 74, 96, 104, 116–117,
 124–125
 Far'ah, Tell el- (North), 26, 50–51, 54, 75, 78,
 80–81, 93–94, 225
 Far'ah, Tell el- (South), 8, 225, 245, 249–250, 256,
 302, 304, 325, 338–339, 345, 348
 feasting. *See* food consumption

- Fifa(cemetery), 41
 food
 consumption, 20, 82, 84, 88, 107, 118–119, 148, 162, 190, 194, 203, 242, 248–249, 258, 289, 295–296, 298, 306, 320, 323
 production, 14, 20, 28, 32, 34–35, 55, 75, 150–151, 161, 215, 240, 354
- Gadot, 40, 93
 Gat. *See* Safi, Tell es-
 Gat-Hefer, Tel, 100
 Gaza, 59, 288
 Gesher, 190–194, 196–197, 199
 Gezer (Tell el-Jizr), 8, 50, 225, 252, 338, 340
 Gibeon. *See* Jib, el-
 gifts, 3, 17, 35, 58, 61, 85, 88, 91, 116, 203, 220–221, 286, 301, 316, 318, 323, 329, 336, 346–347
 Gilgal, 15
 Giloh, 328
 Golan (Jaulan), 6, 15, 74, 88, 90, 94, 96, 122, 165, 193, 340
 gold, 200–202, 233, 246, 276, 301, 318, 324–325, 328, 331, 335, 340
 ground stone, 32, 37, 47, 55, 86, 148, 150, 152–153, 240
- Hagosherim, 165, 193, 196
 Halif, Tel, 28, 45, 60, 65, 96, 104
 Hamra Ifdan, Khirbet, 123, 163
 Handaqu, Tell (South), 96, 100
 Haqirya cemetery (Tel Aviv), 50, 189
 Har Haruvim, 91
 Har Yeroham, 152–153, 159, 161–162
 Harasim, Tel, 326
 Haror, 247–249
 Haror, Tel (Tell Abu Hureyra), 225, 245, 250–252, 284, 302
 Hauran, 6, 35, 122, 141, 164, 189, 225, 232, 254
 Hayyat, Tell el-, 141, 183, 193–195, 203
 Hazor (Tell el-Qedah), 10, 74, 96–97, 117, 141, 145, 189, 225, 228–233, 244, 251, 253, 264, 278, 284, 310–318, 320–321, 328, 334–336, 345, 347–348
 Hazorea', 150, 168–169, 256
 Hesi, Tell el-, 8–9, 96, 104, 302
 Holyland Hotel (cemetery), 241
 Horshim, 170
 Hujeyrat el-Ghuzlan, 39
 Hula Valley, 29–30, 40, 74–75, 94, 113, 123, 141, 158, 189, 232
- Ifshar, Tell el-, 183, 204–205, 220
 Iktanu, Tell, 150
 'Illin Tahit, 46
 Iskandar, Khirbat, 148, 151–152, 158
- Jaffa, 288, 291–292, 300, 332
 Jamous, Tell, 189
 Jawa, 28, 32, 225, 254
 Jebel el-Mutawwaq, 32
 Jebel Qa'aqir, 153, 164–165, 172
 Jemmeh, Tell, 8, 225, 249, 302
 Jericho (Tell es-Sultan), 8, 11, 15, 45, 47, 50, 75, 93, 96–97, 112, 114, 126, 145, 165, 167, 169, 183, 189, 197–198, 225, 228, 252, 256, 259
- Jerusalem, 1, 10–11, 151, 189, 225, 228, 236–238, 242–243, 251, 253, 263, 321, 326, 328, 339
 Mount of Olives, 328, 339
 Nahalat Ahim, 328
 Jib, el-, 165, 189, 256
 Jordan Valley
 ceramic traditions, 52, 91, 113, 139, 156–157, 182, 196, 204, 227, 263, 281, 286, 347
 settlement, 15, 45, 50, 74–75, 118, 122, 140–141, 148–150, 188, 190–200, 215, 228, 283–284, 309, 327, 342, 344
- Kabri, Tel, 46, 183, 189, 193, 225, 228, 233–236, 244, 251, 253, 257, 263, 265
 Kamid el-Loz, 12, 225, 232, 251, 288, 300–302, 338
 Katarat as-Samra, 328
 Kazel, Tell, 189
 Keisan, Tel, 345
 Kenyon, Kathleen M., 11, 66, 138, 165, 174, 236, 252
 Kfar Monash, 61
 Kirmil, 165, 171
 Kitan, Tel, 47, 51, 53–54, 65, 194, 285
 Kufin, Khirbat, 189, 197
 Kumidi. *See* Kamid el-Loz
- Labwe, 74, 80, 141
 Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir), 8, 144, 146, 165, 225, 252, 256, 263, 278–279, 281, 284, 302, 321, 324–327, 335, 340, 345
 Lawiyeh (Leviah), 74, 96, 101
 Leja, 6, 29, 34
 Levant
 connectivity, 3, 7, 174, 222, 224, 272
 definition, 3–4
 geography of, 4–7
 history of excavations, 8–12
 trajectories, 12, 15, 96, 124, 136, 144, 200, 262, 309, 341
 literacy, 232
 alphabetic inscriptions, 222–224, 324
 cuneiform tablets, 232–233, 244, 300, 306, 320–321, 328
 graffiti, 60, 72, 324
 hieratic inscriptions, 302, 325, 343
 linear inscriptions, 327
 scribes, 306, 342
 lithics, 37–38, 55
 Liverani, Mario, 286
 Lod, 60, 65
- Ma'abarot, 50, 165
 Ma'adi, 20, 58, 128
 Madaba, 340
 Magass, Tell el-, 39
 Malha. *See* Manahat
 Malhata, Tel, 226, 254
 Manahat, 241, 243–244, 328
 Mardikh, Tell. *See* Ebla
 Mari, 215, 232
 maritime trade, 95, 124, 137, 164, 185, 190, 201, 206, 219–222, 225–226, 329–334, 345
 markets, 3, 56, 79, 81–82, 86, 91, 101, 127, 163, 330
 Mash'abei Sadeh, 159, 162
 Masos, Tel (Khirbet el-Mshash), 226, 254

- Maz'arib, 150
 Me'ona, Tel, 77
 Megadim, 47
 Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesellim), 6, 8, 26, 28, 43, 46,
 48–50, 55–56, 61, 64, 71, 92, 96–97, 106, 108,
 111, 115, 126, 141, 145, 150, 165, 168, 189, 193,
 209, 216, 225, 251, 253, 256, 260, 278, 284,
 315–318, 334, 337, 340, 344–345, 347
 Mevorakh, Tel, 204, 217, 278, 280, 284
 Mezudat Har Zayyad, 162
 Minshat Abu Omar, 45
 Mique, Tel (Tell el-Muqqaneh), 343
 Mit Rahina inscription, 185–186, 214
 Mor, Tel, 263, 281, 284, 307
 Moza, 28, 170
 Murhan, 141, 151

 Na'ama, Tel (Tell en-Na'ameh), 147, 197, 232
 Nahal Boqer, 162
 Nahal Nizzana, 160
 Nahal Refa'im, 149, 151, 238–244
 Nahal Rimmonim, 141
 Nahal Tavor (cemetery), 93
 Nahal Tillah. *See* Halif, Tel
 Nahariya, 202–203
 Nahr el-Kalb, 300
 Najila, Tell el-(Tel Nagila), 120, 225, 246, 249–250,
 252
 Nami, Tel, 220, 225, 330, 332, 339
 Narmer, 58, 60, 62
 Negev Highlands, 6, 75, 94, 113, 139, 142, 152, 159,
 162, 164–165, 167, 226
 Neolithic period, 14–15
 Netiv Hagdud, 15
 Nimrin, Tell, 225
 Nizzanim, 28
 Numayra, Tell and Wadi, 56, 96–97, 100

 palaces and manor houses
 Early Bronze Age, 79, 85, 99, 105–107
 Late Bronze Age, 278, 286, 301, 305–306,
 311–312, 317–321, 323, 334, 346
 Middle Bronze Age, 209, 211, 217, 230, 234–235,
 243, 251–252
 Palmahim Quarry, 47, 56
 Pella, 9, 11, 48, 72, 194, 209, 215–216, 251, 278, 281,
 284, 292, 339
 Petrie, W.M. Flinders, 8, 222, 245–246, 276, 302
 Petura, 45
 Poleg, Tel, 219, 225

 Qashish, Tel (Tell Qasis), 47, 75, 77, 81, 96, 219
 Qasile West, 189
 Qatna, 214, 234, 258, 317
 Qedesh cave, 172
 Qiryat Ata, 45, 47, 74, 76, 81–82, 94
 Qiryat Shemona, 215, 217, 232
 Qishron, Horbat, 151
 Qishyon, Tel, 117
 Qubur al-Walaydah, 302

 Rafid, 141
 Ramat Hanadiv, 167
 Rehov, Tel, 193, 197, 256, 321, 344
 Rishon Le-Zion (cemetery), 189, 256, 262

 Rogem Be'erotayim, 161
 Rukeis, Tell er-, 254
 Rumeida, Tell er-, 96, 103, 225, 236, 244

 Sa'idiya, Tell es-, 65, 75, 86, 94, 304–305, 338–339
 Safi, es- (cemetery), 41
 Safi, Tell es-, 96–97, 100, 116–117, 326, 343, 345
 Sakan, Tell es-, 59, 64–65, 96–97, 104, 126, 144
 Sakka, Tell, 232
 Sarepta, 283, 330, 345
 scarabs. *See* seals and seal-impressions
 seals and seal-impressions, 15, 19–20, 51, 54, 60, 63,
 88, 92, 116–117, 124, 198, 202, 212, 219, 222,
 239, 243, 247, 249, 256, 260–262, 281–282,
 297, 301, 304–305, 312, 318, 322–323, 331
 senses and sensory environment, 14, 18, 36, 117, 213,
 234, 249, 257, 320, 336
 Serabit el-Khadim, 198, 222–223
 Sha'ar Hagolan, 139, 144, 148–149, 156–157
 Shalem, Tel, 48, 64
 Sharaya, 34, 225, 254
 Sharia', Tell esh- (Tel Sera'), 245, 249, 302, 307, 325
 Sharuhin, 180, 244, 247
 Shechem (Tell Balata), 8, 189, 225, 236, 243, 285,
 335, 345, 347
 Sheikh Sa'ad, 300
 Shihab, Tell esh-, 300
 Shiloh (Tell Seilun), 225, 236, 243, 251, 321, 326,
 328
 Shimron, Tel, 189
 shrines and temples
 Chalcolithic, 17
 Early Bronze, 43, 45, 48–49, 56–57, 61, 70,
 79–80, 85, 107–110, 115, 124, 127, 130, 154, 176
 Intermediate Bronze, 154
 Late Bronze, 278–279, 281–282, 284–285, 291,
 293, 297, 301–302, 307–308, 310–318,
 324–326, 331–332, 336, 342, 344, 346–347
 Middle Bronze, 180, 193–194, 200–203, 213–214,
 226, 230–232, 236, 238–239, 241, 243,
 247–249, 251–253, 258
 Shuna, Tell esh-, 46–47, 56, 64, 117
 Shuni, 189, 193, 204
 Sidon, 28, 30, 32, 42, 93, 96, 116, 124, 189, 193, 197,
 206, 220, 225, 261, 330, 340
 silver, 51, 174–175, 185, 200–204, 231, 233, 243, 276,
 301, 312, 320, 331, 335
 Sinai, 39, 95, 142, 158, 174
 alphabetic inscriptions, 222–223
 northern, 35, 45, 58, 62–63, 129, 142, 159, 190,
 245, 289
 southern, 75, 80, 88, 90, 94
 Site H, 26
 Small Tel Malhata, 61
 social debts and obligations, 14, 18, 56, 155, 168,
 172, 188, 203, 207, 236, 265, 286
 subsistence. *See* food production

 Ta'anakh (Tell Ta'anek), 8, 225, 318, 320
 Taur Ikhebeineh, 28, 35
 Tel 'Ashir, 154
 Tel Halif Terrace. *See* Halif, Tel
 Te'o, Tel, 28, 30
 textiles, 81, 100, 127, 137, 150, 164, 174, 180, 232,
 234, 259, 287, 295, 330, 336

- Thera, 234, 276
 pumice, 264, 276–277
 volcanic eruption, 184, 234, 264, 275–276
 Three-Age system, 1–2
 Timna, 38, 56, 308–309
 Timnian culture, 25, 75, 132, 153, 158, 161, 255
 Tiwal ash-Sharqi, 141, 150, 165–166
 traction complex, 34–35, 42, 76, 122, 240, 354
 Tur'an, 228
 Tura, at-, 300
 Tyre, 74, 141, 283, 300, 330, 345

 Ugarit (Ras Shamra), 272, 306, 329, 331–332, 334
 Uluburun shipwreck, 329, 334–335
 Um Hammad, Tell, 46, 52, 141, 147, 149
 Umbashi, Khirbat, 116, 141, 225
 Umeiri, Tell el-, 9, 96
 Umm ed-Dananir, 340
 Umm el-Marra, 258
 urbanism and urbanization, 2, 18, 20, 25, 37, 44, 70–71, 79–83, 95, 111, 113, 123, 127–131, 221, 226, 229–230, 236–238, 244–245, 251–253, 257–258, 264, 284, 311, 343, 354, 356
 Uruk Mesopotamia, 18–19, 25, 29, 43

 villages, 15, 17, 24, 28, 95, 128–129, 180, 286, 354
 Early Bronze IA, 29–35
 Early Bronze IB, 43, 46–47, 55–58, 64–65
 Early Bronze II, 72–76, 94
 Early Bronze III, 97, 121

 Intermediate Bronze Age, 140, 148–154, 172, 175
 Late Bronze Age, 284, 326, 328, 343
 Middle Bronze I, 189–190, 193–194, 206
 Middle Bronze II, 225, 235, 238–244, 251, 256, 264
 Transitional Bronze-Iron, 343–345

 Wadi Feinan, 38, 56, 90–91, 123, 163
 Wadi al-Hammah (cemetery), 141, 165
 Wadi Makukh cave, 39
 Wadi Zimra, 242
 Walajeh, 241–243
 warfare, 99, 187–188, 198, 286, 346, 355

 Yadin, Yigael, 10, 62, 176, 278, 314, 328
 Yaqush, Tel, 97, 117
 Yarmuth, Tel, 72, 75, 78, 96–97, 99–100, 104–106, 111, 114, 116, 126, 144, 146
 Yavneh-Yam, 209, 215
 Yehud, 165
 Yiftah'el, 28, 30, 32, 34
 Yin'am, Tel, 348
 Yoqne'am, Tel, 189, 209, 219, 225, 263, 278–279, 344

 Zahrat adh-Dhra', 226, 254–255
 Zeraqun, Khirbet ez-, 74, 77, 86, 96–97, 101–102, 105, 107, 116, 127
 Zeror, Tel, 209
 Zohar ascent, 91
 Zuckerman, Sharon, 230, 278, 316–317

